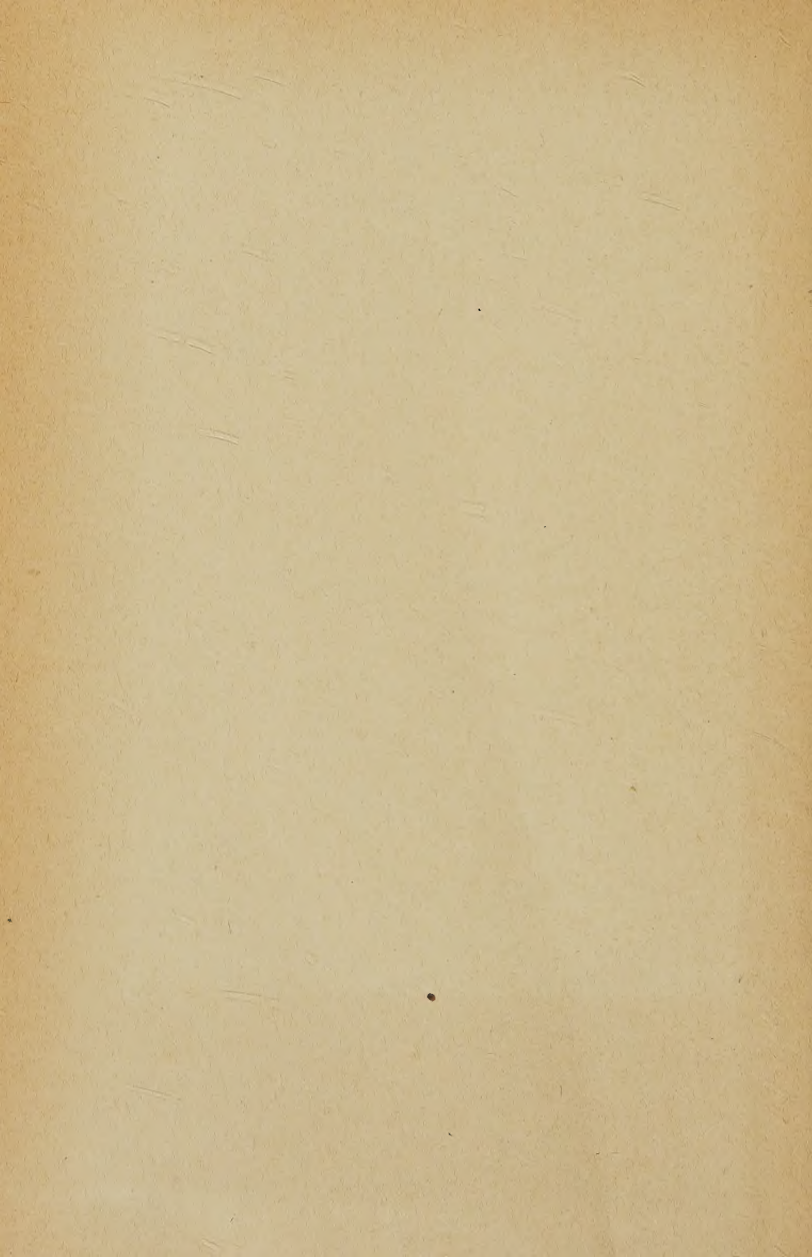


Banners and Battlefields



EDITH GREEVES





- Frontispiece.

"In a moment poor Willie was sprawling on his back in the mud."—Page 38.

BANNERS
AND
BATTLE-FIELDS.


BY
EDITH GREEVES.



LONDON :

WESLEYAN METHODIST SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION,
2 AND 3 LUDGATE CIRCUS BUILDINGS; 2 CASTLE ST., CITY ROAD, E.C.

LOVINGLY DEDICATED TO THE
PRECIOUS MEMORY OF A BELOVED FATHER AND MOTHER,
WHO HAVE "FOUGHT THEIR WAY THROUGH,"
AND ARE WAITING FOR THEIR CHILDREN
IN THE HOME ABOVE.



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THE TWO BANNERS:

OR,

“I WILL FOLLOW JESUS.”

*An Allegory suggested by the Motto for Children's Sunday,
October, 1893.*

“The Son of God goes forth to war,
A kingly crown to gain,
His blood-red banner streams afar;
Who follows in His train?”



THE TWO BANNERS.

PART I.

THE sun had just risen above the horizon when a confusion of sounds reached my ear, reminding me very forcibly that the day just dawning belonged exclusively to the little people.

It was *Children's Day*, and for the time being all the grown-ups in the world seemed to have disappeared. The place was full of children—laughing, crying, playing, shouting, disputing, as children do in turns. With much curiosity I drew aside my curtains and peeped from the window to see whatever could be the cause of all this commotion,—and a strange sight met my view.

Such a crowd of bairns, little and big, pale-faced and rosy, well-dressed and ragged; all sorts and

conditions of children, and all strangely excited about something! What could it be?

They were gathered in an immense open piece of ground, on which two huge banners had been planted, as far apart as the space would allow.

One banner was red in colour, and bore in large white letters the motto "I WILL FOLLOW JESUS," with the figure of a cross below it, and a crown above; while underneath was the picture of a Shepherd leading a flock of lambs, and in smaller letters the words: "*Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.*"

The other banner was black, with an inscription in huge letters of gold, "I WILL FOLLOW SELF." This banner had a picture of a large golden lion which seemed very attractive to the boys. There were also some glittering toys depicted on it, but I could not well make out what they were, as this banner was not so near to me as the other.

And now I began to understand what all the chattering was about. The children were ranging themselves round one or other of these banners, and it was not an easy matter to decide which they would follow. Some seemed to like one better, and some the other; and yet all wanted to go with their own friends. Hence the Babel of tongues that had at first aroused my notice. No wonder there was so much arguing and disputing, and

clamouring and shouting. I became deeply interested in the scene, and opened the window that I might hear more distinctly what they were saying.

The first words that caught my ear were from a boy who was standing by the black-and-gold banner.

"Come with us," he shouted to a boy who stood in the group round the other banner. "Come with us! Our banner is much better than that one. Come along, Easy!"

Easy looked up at his own banner and shook his head. How glad I felt; for, indeed, that banner seemed to me much more attractive than the other one.

"But, Albert Easy, don't you know," shouted the boy, "that our army is going along a much pleasanter road than yours? We are going through wide green fields, where there will be butterflies to chase, plenty of flowers to pick, and fruit trees off which we may gather all kinds of delicious fruit; while that army is going up a rugged steep hill, along a toilsome narrow road, and through a dreary desert where there will be nothing to eat or to drink. You are a fool if you go with them!"

Albert Easy listened and hesitated. Finally, after a few moments' consideration, he sauntered across the intervening space and joined his friend.

Then shouts and cheers arose from the group

around the black-and-gold banner. The noise was perfectly deafening ; but somehow I felt disappointed, and could not sympathise in the rejoicing.

When the hurrahs had subsided, sweet notes of music fell upon my ear, and I found that the other group of children were softly singing :

“ All the way my Saviour leads me,
Cheers each winding path I tread,
Gives me grace for every trial,
Feeds me with the living bread.
Though my weary steps may falter,
And my soul athirst may be,
Gushing from the Rock before me,
Lo, a spring of joy I see ! ”

After the noise that had greeted Albert Easy's arrival was over, the first boy again stood forth and began calling across to the group around the red banner.

He was a bright-faced lad whom I well knew. His name was Friendly Enticement, and he was a general favourite with his school-fellows. Clever, sharp-witted, genial, he was a born leader, and immensely popular with all the boys of the town. Wherever Friendly went he always had a crowd of followers. Whatever Friendly said or did, these others applauded and strove to imitate him. It was the more surprising, therefore, that, when the children took their places round the banner, five or six of Friendly's boon companions had separated from him and chosen the “ blood-red banner of the cross.”

One of these deserters had just been reclaimed, and now Friendly was looking out for the rest.

"Why, Peter!" he called to a nervous-looking lad who was glancing uneasily about him, "Peter Craven, *you* over there! Why, you *do* astonish me! Ha, ha, ha," he laughed, "what a joke!"

"Why, what's the matter?" cried Peter in alarm. "Why shouldn't I be here? It's all right, isn't it?"

"All right? I should think it *was* all right, indeed! As you are so fond of fighting, Peter, of course it is all right for *you*, but *we* know better. We are wise enough to go on the safe side."

"Why, they told me *this* was the road to safety," cried poor Peter, turning pale with fright.

"Safety indeed! It is crowded with dangers all the way along. Man alive! don't you know *that* army is going through a hostile country, and will have to fight every inch of the way?"

"But your army will have to fight, too, won't it?" said Peter.

"Not it," said Friendly. "We know better. We choose a road where we shall not meet any enemies. No one will dare to molest us. But as you are so fond of fighting, you may as well belong to that banner and you'll get plenty of it."

"But I don't belong to this banner," said Peter Craven, looking up at its bright red folds in dismay. "I can change if I like," and he walked over towards Friendly.

"But if I join you," he continued, "you must promise to stick up for me if we *do* come across any dangers."

"Of course," said Friendly, "we are all chums here. All our fellows are coming on this side, and we shall stand up for one another. But you need not fear that any one will molest *us*."

Another burst of cheering greeted Peter Craven, while the other children sang:

"Trust in Him who is your Captain;
Let no heart in terror quail:
Jesus leads the conquering legions,
In His name we shall prevail."

"Now, Bruce Manly," shouted Friendly to another of his old companions, "what are you doing there? That is quite the wrong place for a fine fellow like you. Come over here to us."

Bruce Manly was a tall well-shaped boy, who held his head very high and seemed to fear nothing. He started slightly at Friendly's call, but a little pale-faced boy who stood near him whispered something in his ear. Then he rejoiced to see the look of noble resolve that lit up his countenance as he glanced across to his former comrade, and signified by a gesture that he intended to remain where he was.

But Friendly would not be put off so easily.

"Why, Manly, old fellow," he shouted, "you are making a great mistake. Look at *your* company, and look at *ours*. This is the place for brave boys

who are out of leading-strings, and want to grow up into truly great men. *That* is the place for girls, and babies, and fools. Ours is the grandest, noblest enterprise. Come with us if you want to have daring exploits, and to do brave and famous deeds. Come with us, and we will make a *hero* of you."

The eager young voice rang out in the clear morning air, and the words took effect. Bruce Manly looked round upon his companions, then across at the other group of children. Then whispering to the little pale-faced Theodore, he pressed his hand, and strode across to join the other company.

A perfect thunder of applause greeted the arrival of Bruce Manly; but the children of the red banner looked disappointed. Little Theodore wept for a short time, but presently was able to join the others as they sang :

"Strike ! O strike for victory, heroes of the cross,
Sacrificing pleasure, glorying in loss :
Bind the helmet stronger, tighter grasp the sword,
Conquering and to conquer, battle for the Lord."

Bruce Manly looked wistfully towards his old companions when he heard the words they were singing, but Friendly was on the alert, and seizing his arm, whispered something in his ear which seemed to satisfy Bruce, and they both laughed.

Again I was disappointed.

"Oh, Friendly," I thought, "I wish you were on the other side ! You make such a splendid recruiting-

sergeant. Your powerful influence and enthusiastic zeal are worthy of a better cause."

Friendly now counted over his company, and then held up three of his fingers.

"Three more of them gone astray," he said, with a laugh. "We must have them back somehow."

"Hallo, Hearty," he called to a boy who was walking towards the other banner. "Hearty Bright, we are just wanting *you*!"

Hearty was a chubby, rollicking, jovial sort of youngster, full of fun and merriment, ready for any boyish pranks, and brimming over with good nature.

"Here's a lark, Hearty," called Friendly, "we are going to have no end of a spree. Come along."

Hearty looked over his shoulder at Friendly and laughed, but continued his walk towards the other group.

"You'll get no fun there, Hearty," cried Friendly, "don't be a goose. They'll have an awfully slow time, poor things. I would not go with them if I were you. Besides, we want you here. You are such a jolly sort of fellow, we can't do without you. You won't forsake your old friends, will you, Hearty?"

Hearty stood still at these words, and I feared he was going to yield. Would he, too, be persuaded to forsake the red banner? Would he listen to the false and wily words of the flatterer, or would he

heed another Voice, which was whispering in his ear :
" My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not."

After a moment's hesitation, Hearty shook his head at Friendly, and pointed to a tiny, bright-eyed girl who was clinging to his hand. It was his little sister, Merry.

" Bring Merry with you," shouted Friendly. " Tell her she will have lots of toys and playmates here, and no hard lessons to learn like those children have. Come along, both of you."

Hearty said something to his sister, and the little damsel nodded her curly head. Then Hearty and Merry Bright walked hand in hand towards the black-and-gold banner.

Once more there was a burst of cheering, and once more I heaved a bitter sigh of disappointment.

Then came a chorus of juvenile voices singing in gladsome strain :

" The world looks very beautiful,
And full of joy to me ;
The sun shines out in glory
On everything I see.
I know I shall be happy
While in the world I stay,
For I will follow Jesus
All the way."

There were still two of Friendly's chums missing, and it was some minutes before he could discover their whereabouts. Meanwhile he busied himself in getting other recruits, and I sorrowfully noted the

fact that, partly owing to his endeavours, and partly because of the glowing attractions depicted on the banner, there were a greater number of children flocking to his side than to the other.

It was a brilliant spectacle. The bright-hued banners streamed aloft, glittering in the sunshine. The groups of excited children moving about hither and thither, gave life to the picture; while the occasional outbursts of inspiring music added to the effect, and combined to render it a truly fascinating and never-to-be forgotten scene. Fresh parties of children came trooping in every minute from the surrounding villages.

A bright open-faced boy, with fearless blue eyes and fair curly hair, was roaming about on the outskirts of the crowd round the red banner, sometimes going in and out among the children, but never getting very near to the banner, or allowing himself to be hemmed in by the crowd.

Presently Friendly saw him.

"Frank Freeman," he called, "I want to speak to you."

Frank drew near to him.

"What do you think of all this?" said Friendly, in a confidential tone. "What are you going to do, old boy? You'll come with us, of course."

"Not I," laughed Frank. "I'm not going to be tied to follow any banner. I shall just go where I like and do as I please."

Friendly laughed pleasantly.

"To be sure," he said. "I know you are fond of liberty; that is why I thought you would join us. Here you *may* do as you like, and wander where you will. You see the processions will be starting directly, and you are bound to go with either one or the other. If you follow that banner you will find that you are kept to a narrow path, and bound down by all sorts of restrictions. Why, it is perfect slavery! *Our* procession will move along a wide road, where we shall have plenty of room to roam about and follow our own sweet will."

"Well, I'm not sure yet what I shall do," said Frank. "They seem a jolly sort of lot over there, and at any rate there is no hurry about deciding just now. I haven't quite made up my mind."

"There is just this to be said about it, old fellow," replied his companion, "if you join our procession and find that you don't like our company, you can, at any time, leave us and join the other procession. You are not bound in any way, you know."

"Is that so?" said Frank. "I did not know that. Well, I'll have a look round, and perhaps I may decide to do as you say." So saying he began to whistle, and wandered off, threading his way in and out among the children of the black-and-gold banner.

Friendly looked after him, and then winked at his companions.

"He's a wary old bird," he said, "but I think we have caught him."

At the same time he held up his hand to stop the usual outburst of cheering.

"You will frighten him away if you do that," he said.

Very clearly and distinctly then could be heard the sweet voice of little Theodore, singing :

"In a service which Thy will appoints
There are no bonds for me ;
For my inmost soul is taught the truth
That makes Thy children free ;
And a life of self-renouncing love
Is a life of liberty."

Then all the other pilgrim children joined in a happy song :

"Follow, follow, I would follow Jesus,
Anywhere, everywhere, I would follow on."

The bustle and excitement now became more intense, as the sun was getting high in the heavens, and the time was evidently drawing near for the processions to start.

Presently, Friendly caught sight of the last of his companions who had deserted him, and who, up to this time, had been hidden in the crowd clustered nearest to the red banner. A movement among the children disclosed to view the figure of a tall dark-haired lad, with bronzed face, broad shoulders, and sturdy well-knit frame.

"Hooray, Daniel," shouted Friendly, "there you are at last. I wondered whatever had become of you. You are the only one of our set not here. Make haste, old chap, and come along."

Daniel shook his head.

"O, but I say, Daniel Steadfast, you are not going to treat your old friends like this. You and I have been chums all our lives—play-fellows and school-fellows from our earliest days. And now are we to separate and go different roads? Surely you won't forsake an old friend in that manner."

"I have no wish to forsake old friends," said Daniel; "but neither can I desert the standard of my King."

"Well, if you won't listen to me, look at all these other chaps. All your friends are here. Here's Albert Easy, Bruce Manly, Peter Craven, Hearty Bright, Frank Freeman; and here also are your two very particular chums, Duke Diamond and Victor Laurel."

The latter of these was a dreamy-looking lad, exceedingly studious and clever, who always managed to keep at the top of his form and to carry off most of the prizes.

The former was the son of the richest man in the town, and was accompanied by his sister Queenie, a beautiful girl, with handsome dark eyes of deepest violet, and auburn hair. She was dressed in costly velvet adorned with pearls and jewels.

"Come," said Friendly, with a laugh, "you won't have any such swells as these in that company."

Then, laying one hand on the shoulder of Duke Diamond, and the other on Victor Laurel's, he continued :

"This is the road to riches and honour. This is the road to fortune and fame, to glory and renown ! Come and join us, if you want to be wealthy and honourable and distinguished. Come with us, and we will have a regular good time all together."

Daniel looked at his old friends standing in array before him, and sighed :

"I wish you would all come over here," he said ; "but if you won't, I'm afraid we must part. I have made my choice, and mean to stick to it."

"So have we made our choice, and intend to stick to it," said Friendly ; "and I think we have made the best choice. You would think so to, if you would join us for a little while. Come, old chummie, change your mind for once, and you won't regret it. I thought you were a faithful friend, but your friendship is not worth much if you won't do that for your old comrades. All the others have come when I asked them, and surely you will too. You are not going to be the only one of my friends to forsake me, are you?"

Daniel did not reply, but seemed to be in deep thought.

Friendly was just going to speak again, when he

was interrupted by the sweet voice of little Theodore beginning to sing :

“ O brother, yield not to the tempter,
No matter what others may do ;
Stand firm in the strength of the Master,
Be loyal, be faithful, and true !
God calls you to enter His service—
To live for Him here day by day ;
And share by and by in the glory
That never shall vanish away.”

And then all the children took up the words of the chorus :

“ God help you to follow His banner,
And serve Him wherever you go ;
And when you are tempted, my brother,
God give you the grace to say, ‘ No ! ’ ”

While they were singing, Daniel Steadfast stood with bent head and anxious brow. As soon as they ceased he lifted his head, turned round with a look of determination on his face, and made the best of his way to the spot where the blood-red banner stood, floating in the breeze. He stretched out his hand and laid hold of the banner, and then turned and faced his comrades.

“ Well, what are you going to do ? ” said Friendly. “ Are you going to forsake your old friends, Daniel Steadfast ? Tell us.”

Still clinging to the banner with one hand, Daniel raised the other, and replied in a solemn voice :

“ I am determined not to know anything among men, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.”

And then, in a firm clear voice, he sang :

“Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee,” &c.

“Fool!” muttered Friendly, as he turned away chagrined; while the other children burst into a hearty song :

“Dare to be a Daniel,
Dare to stand alone,
Dare to have a purpose firm,
Dare to make it known !”

How they shouted it again and again, while the others could only deride !

And there stood the youthful Daniel—the only one of Friendly’s chums who had the courage to resist his enticements; the only one who dared to be singular; the only one who was brave enough to choose what seemed the weaker side.

I noticed Bruce Manly look at him with admiration, and even take a step forward as if to go to stand by his side; but Friendly again interposed, and Bruce fell back into his place with a laugh, not having sufficient manliness to resist temptation, and come forward boldly to enlist under the Banner of the Cross.





PART II.



ALL this time the children of the red banner had not been idle. Moving in and out among the loiterers, I saw several of them wearing the red and white badge, trying to persuade others to join them.

Conspicuous among them was a boy named Ernest Zeal. He, on his side, seemed to be gaining almost as many recruits as Friendly Enticement. His sister Martha, too, was very busy, speaking eagerly to one and another, urging them to join the procession of the red banner.

In a quieter way, more timidly, but not less earnestly, little Theodore Pilgrim, his brother Christopher, and their sister Mary, were seeking recruits; but they never wandered very far from the banner itself.

The children round the banner were singing :

“ Who is on the Lord’s side ?
Who will serve the King ? ”

And now the tide seemed to have turned in favour of the red banner. Daniel’s bold confession had exerted a wonderful influence, and more and more

children came over to enroll themselves under the Banner of the Cross.

By and by, my attention was attracted to Ernest and Martha, who were walking together towards a group of children standing close under my window, so close that, hitherto, I had not noticed them. I jumped up, and my heart beat with eager anxiety ; for those four children standing there—were they not the most precious to me of all the children in the world? Had I not nursed them in their babyhood, watched their little lives expand, day by day, and month by month, watched their physical and intellectual growth, and the unfolding of their several characters and dispositions? Had I not prayed for these children, every day of their lives, that they might eschew the evil and choose the good? And now, on this Children's Day, there they stood, looking on bewildered at the wonderful scene before them ; and I knew that the moment of decision had arrived for *them* too. Even now they must make their choice—the choice that would affect the whole of their future lives. Would they choose to follow the red banner or the black? Would their motto for life be “ I will follow Jesus,” or “ I will follow Self ”?

Four dear children ! How shall I describe them ? I must not dwell too long upon their charms. There was fairy-like Grace, with her sweet face framed in soft sunny hair ; tall and fair, and queenly, in her girlhood's prime, yet with a sweet and bashful

countenance that spoke of child-like innocence and simplicity. Then there was Faith, with dark eyes and hair, and earnest, thoughtful face. Hope came next, rosy and smiling. And then little Joy, the bright-faced darling of the family. They were all lovely children, carefully nurtured in a peaceful and loving home.

Ernest and Martha drew near to this group of sisters, and entered into conversation with them. I could not catch all that was said, but I eagerly watched every movement and gesture, for I felt that my highest hopes were at stake.

But who is this beautiful girl running quickly towards the group, her long dark curls floating in the summer breeze, her rosy lips parted, her bright eyes glowing with excitement? I recognised her at once. It was Winnie Enticement, sister of Friendly, and Grace's favourite school-fellow. A pang shot through my heart, as I saw her draw Grace aside, and begin to earnestly converse with her. She pointed to the black-and-yellow-banner, and the merry crowd around it, and linked her arm through Grace's as if to draw her towards it.

Meanwhile, Ernest and Martha continued in conversation with the younger ones.

"I will go with Gracie," I heard the lisping voice of little Joy declare in shrill tones; and when Martha put her arm around her in a coaxing manner, the child looked distressed and tried to free herself.

"No, no," she cried, "let me go. I want to go with Gracie," and she struggled away from Martha and ran and slipped her hand into Grace's.

Ah, Grace! a double responsibility is yours. You have not only to decide for yourself, but for your little sister.

Ernest was talking to Hope.

"But where are they going?" I heard Hope say. "You tell me the procession is to start directly on a long journey. What is the end of the journey?"

"We are going to a beautiful country a long way off, the other side of those hills," said Ernest. "When we get there we shall forget all the fatigues of the journey, it will be so beautiful and glorious. We shall never weep any more, or suffer any more pain or sorrow. It will be one long, long summer's day of enjoyment. There will be lovely gardens, and fields, and trees, rivers of clear water, and flowers that never fade. We shall never grow old or weary there; and there will be no more sickness, or death, or sorrow, or crying."

"I believe mother would like us to go there," said little Hope, her blue eyes looking wistfully towards the distant hills.

"Yes," said Ernest, "she is going herself; and your father is there now. Don't you want to be with him? And the King who dwells there loves little children, and will make them happy for evermore."

"Listen to what the children are singing," he added after a moment's silence.

Then I heard the children round the red banner singing :

“ Fair is the morning land, bright is the shore,
Where all the saints of God dwell evermore !
There in the morning land sweetly they sing ;
Jesus its glory is—Jesus our King.
Come, little children, come ! hear the angels say :
Come to the shining land, come, come away ! ”

Hope listened, a far-away look in her deep blue eyes, as if already the child beheld “ the King in His beauty,” and “ the land which is very far off.”

“ I will come,” she said at the end of the second verse, putting her hand into Ernest’s, and they walked across the space while the last verse was being sung.

One had chosen aright, and my heart was filled with thankfulness.

Hope, with her smiling face and sunny nature, was sure to be loved wherever she went. Many of the children ran to welcome her, and she was soon the centre of a happy throng of little girls about her own age, and I could hear her sweet voice leading them as they sang :

“ While pilgrims on our journey here,
We oft may faint and weary be ;
But soon our longing, waiting eyes,
The City that we seek shall see ;
And mansions bright are waiting, where
We all shall rest when we get there.”

Then all the children joined in another invitation song :

“ Who’ll be the next to follow Jesus ?
Who’ll be the next His cross to bear ? ”

My eyes went back to Faith, where she stood alone, looking after Hope. Her face was pale and sad, her large dark eyes were filled with tears, and there was a look of weariness and languor about the child that grieved me to the heart, and made me long to comfort her.

I was glad to see Ernest returning to her.

"Won't you come too, Faith?" he said. "Hope wants you to come. See how happy she looks over there, and she is beckoning you. Come along!"

"I'm afraid," said Faith with faltering lips.

"What are you afraid of, dear?" said Ernest gently.

"I should get so tired," said poor trembling Faith, and she burst into tears.

"No, no," he said, "you would get stronger every step of the way, and our Leader is so kind to the weak ones. Why, He carries the little ones in His arms when they are tired, and leads the weary ones so gently and tenderly, and talks to them so lovingly, that they soon feel quite strong again. You can lean upon Him when you feel weary, and He will give you a refreshing drink and strengthening food, so that you will grow stronger and stronger every step you take."

"But I might get lost on the road," said the weeping child.

"Not if you keep your eye fixed on the Leader. He will guide us all the way along."

"But it might be dark so that I could not see Him," faltered Faith.

"Then you must go close to Him, and take hold of His hand," said Ernest. "But it will not often be dark, perhaps not at all."

"But if I cannot find Him?" said Faith. "Suppose I should lose sight of Him."

"Ah, you must not do that," said Ernest. "We must never go where we cannot see our Leader. If you should be so foolish as to stray away, all you have to do is to call Him, and He will come and fetch you back. But it is best and wisest to keep your eyes fixed on the Leader and follow Him, then you will never, never be lost, little Faith. He has promised to guide us safely to the end of the journey."

"Won't you come, dear Faith?" Ernest continued.

Faith did not move, and the look of distress was still on her face.

"There will be enemies to fight," she said. "What shall I do if we meet wild beasts or cruel giants? They would destroy me at once," and she shuddered with fear.

"Poor little Faith," said Ernest pityingly. "Don't you know that our Captain will fight for us? He is stronger than any wild beast or giant. Those who keep near to Him need not fear any foe. He is able to deliver us, and no matter how powerful the enemy is, He will gain the victory for us. Do you think

that that Shepherd," he said, pointing to the picture on the banner, "would let a wolf get hold of one of those helpless little lambs? Neither will our Shepherd permit any harm to come to those who have put themselves under His care."

Faith still hung her head, weeping bitterly, and Ernest looked perplexed. He evidently did not like to leave her thus, and yet seemed as if he could say no more.

Presently his eye brightened.

"Faith," he said, going closer to her, and laying his hand on her shoulder, "Faith, the Captain wants you. He is calling you. Listen!"

Faith raised her head and brushed the tears away. A change came over her face. The sad and anxious expression gradually left it, and the beautiful eyes shone with a wistful expectant look. She stood in a listening attitude, though I could hear no voice, and a look of heavenly gladness stole over her pale face.

Then I heard soft strains of music :

"Jesus is tenderly calling thee home,
Calling to-day, calling to-day !
Why from the sunshine of love wilt thou roam
Farther and farther away !"

When the hymn ceased, Faith stretched out her hand to Ernest.

"I am going," she said, "take me to Him."

"Does He call me too?" said a little voice close behind her.

Little Joy had slipped her hand away from Grace and was now looking after Faith.

"Yes, He is calling you too, little Joy. You are not too small," cried Ernest.

"Little ones, little ones,
Suffer them to come to Me,
Jesus calls the little ones,
Little ones like thee."

Joy clapped her hands in glee, and ran after Faith. By and by I could hear her singing in the fulness of her childish joy :

"I am Jesu's little lamb,
Ever glad at heart I am ;
Jesus loves me, Jesus knows me,
All things fair and good He shows me,
Even calls me by my name ;
Every day He is the same."

Grace alone was left.

Winnie was still talking to her, and urging her to join the other side.

"You are too young and pretty," she said, "to join that gloomy company."

"I don't see that they are gloomy," said Grace ; "they seem happy enough if we may judge by their singing."

"Oh, that means nothing," said Winnie, with a shrug of her shoulders. "They are simply trying to keep up their spirits and imagine that they are going to have a good time. *We* can sing *too*,—much more lively songs than those—and dance, and be merry as the day is long."

"So you say," replied Grace, "but what will the end be? You may have a pleasant journey, but what comes afterwards? Where does that road lead? My mother told me that that banner of yours leads people to destruction."

"*My* mother says it is just as likely to lead us right in the end as the other banner, and by a much pleasanter road,—no hills to climb, no foes to fight, no tunnels to pass through. Ah, you don't know what kind of a road those others will take, dreary and rough and toilsome, often dark and stormy, while ours will be smooth and bright all the way along. Besides, Gracie, that banner will probably lead you into the midst of terrible foes, where a weak girl like you would have no chance at all."

"Where our banner leads us
We may safely go ;
Where our Chief precedes us,
We may face the foe.
His right arm is o'er us,
He our Guide will be,
Christ has gone before us,
Christians, follow ye."

So sang the children, and Grace caught the words. She lifted up her head and said :

"I don't see why I should be afraid. My little sisters have gone there, and surely I can brave any dangers that they can."

Winnie laughed.

"If you come with me," she said, "we shall soon

have them over here too. As soon as they see you are determined to follow this banner they will not stay over there. See if they do not come the minute you take your stand with us."

"I don't think they will come," said Grace.

"O, they will!" said Winnie confidently. "And if they do not come at once, I will send my little sister Fancie over to fetch them. She and Hope were great friends, you know."

"Do you think they would be happier if they followed your banner?"

"Happier? Yes, indeed. They will have a miserable time over there, poor things. But as long as you remain undecided they will stay there in hopes of you joining them. If you make up your mind to follow our banner, and let them see that you mean it, they would soon come and join you. They love you too much to separate themselves from you."

"I would rather we went together," said Grace in a perplexed tone. "I am sure mother would too. They are so little to go by themselves."

"I should think they were," said Winnie. "I would not let my little sister go for anything. Just imagine those small children undertaking that perilous toilsome journey. They will be tired out before the first day's march is over, and probably be left fainting by the roadside. And it would be *your* fault; for if you come with us, I am sure they will come too. We are going by a much easier route, far better for little

children ; and you would have them under your own eye, and know that they were happy and out of harm's way."

Poor Grace was sorely tempted. How I wished that I could put in a word to help her ! But it was the Children's Day. The children must decide for themselves. No one could decide this question for them, though I was glad to find that the mother's teaching was not forgotten.

"Come, Gracie," said Winnie, putting her arm round her in an affectionate manner, "pretty Gracie, don't look so glum. You love me, don't you ? and I'm not such a very naughty girl, am I ? Come with me, and let us be happy together."

Grace smiled, and allowed herself to be led a few steps in the direction of the black banner.

I trembled. Was my pretty Gracie going astray after all ? O, that I might call out and warn her !

"If I start with you," she said, "could I change afterwards if I did not like it ?"

"O yes, easily," said Winnie. "There are short cuts all the way along from our road to theirs."

O, wily Winnie ! Once get Grace on to your side, you know very well that you will probably keep her, for the roads get further and further apart as the journey proceeds.

Grace gave one lingering look to the place where her sisters stood by the red banner, and then started at a sharp pace by Winnie's side towards the other banner.

"O, Grace, Grace, come back!" I tried to cry, but it was no use. No sound issued from my parched throat.

The sun was still shining, the birds were still singing, the children were laughing and talking as merrily as ever, while Grace,—my darling Grace,—was going swift on the road to destruction.

They were singing again :

"Onward, children, onward ! leave the paths of sin,
Hasten to the strait gate, strive to enter in."

Grace stood still to listen to the hymn. Then I saw little Theodore run across to speak to her. He carried a white flower which he handed to Grace, saying :

"The Captain sends you this."

"Don't touch it, Grace," screamed Winnie. "It is a most dangerous flower."

But Grace smiled at little Theodore, and held out her hand. He put the flower into it, and ran back again.

"Throw it away," cried Winnie, starting back as if from some terrible contagion. "It is poisonous! O, Grace, you don't know what harm it will do you."

But Grace held up the little blossom, which I then saw was the white flower of Contrition.

She looked at it earnestly, smelt it, and then a change came over her. She looked startled and bewildered, the tears came into her eyes, and soon she was weeping bitterly.

"Didn't I tell you so?" said Winnie. "O, Grace, you miserable girl, why did you take it? Throw it away at once, I beseech you, dear, dear Gracie; throw it away, and perhaps even yet it may be all right."

But Grace drew away from Winnie, and pressed the tiny flower closer and closer to her breast, all the time becoming more and more agitated.

Then the little messenger came again, and handed her another flower, saying:

"The Captain sends you this."

It was the sweet flower of Prayer, and as soon as she had smelt it she became calmer. She turned her eyes towards the red banner, and then, to my rejoicing, she set out to go to it. Immediately, her sisters, Faith and Hope, came forward to meet her, and walking one on each side of her, they conducted her right into the centre of the crowd gathered around the Banner of the Cross, where she was received with glad songs of welcome.

When next I saw Grace, her little sister Joy had fast hold of her hand, the other two were close beside her; and she wore on her breast, not only the two flowers which Theodore had brought to her, but a third one—the lovely white flower of Forgiveness—which I supposed she had received from the Captain's own hand.

I bowed my head in thankfulness that all my darlings were now on the right side.

Grace was only just in time. The sun was now

high in the heavens, and rapid preparations were being made for a start. The banner was taken up and carried forward to some distance, so that there was a considerable space between it and the crowd of children ; all could therefore distinctly see it. I noticed that Theodore's brother Christopher was one of those appointed to carry the banner. Daniel Steadfast was another. While the procession was being arranged, every eye was kept fixed on the banner as it glittered in the sunshine, and all voices joined in singing : —

“ Brightly gleams our banner,
Pointing to the sky,
Waving wanderers onward
To their home on high.”

The other procession was also being formed. Great excitement reigned around the black-and-yellow banner as the leader collected his forces around him ; but my interest centred in the red banner children, and I scarcely looked at the others.

Each child in my procession wore a red-and-white badge, bearing the figure of a cross, as depicted on the banner.

In arranging the children, the younger and more feeble ones were placed in the front, where they would be immediately behind the leader. The older and stronger ones brought up the rear.

When the little ones had been arranged, their division was marched forward to where the red

banner stood, and as they went, their infant voices were raised in songs of praise.

“Children of the Heavenly King,
As we journey sweetly sing :
Sing our Saviour’s worthy praise,
Glorious in His works and ways.”

Then the older division was put into marching order, and when they too were ready they marched forward, singing :

“We are marching on with shield and banner bright ;
We will work for God, and battle for the right ;
We will praise His name, rejoicing in His might ;
And we’ll work till Jesus calls.”

Now the procession was complete. It was a beautiful sight—the large red banner fluttering in the distance, and the long procession of children. I gazed entranced.

At last the order to march was given. The band struck up, and the whole procession began to move forward, while all the voices joined in singing :

“Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war,
With the cross of Jesus
Going on before ;
Christ, the royal Master,
Leads against the foe !
Forward, into battle,
See His banners go !”

I watched them moving slowly on, till the strains of music became fainter and fainter in the distance, and the procession looked like a bright thread winding along the narrow road up the hill-side, and at last was lost to sight over the crest of the hill.

THE
CHILDREN'S BATTLE-FIELD,

A SEQUEL TO "THE TWO BANNERS."

"In the world's broad field of battle,
In the bivouac of life,
Be not like dumb driven cattle,
Be a hero in the strife."

Longfellow.



WHAT WILLIE THOUGHT ABOUT IT.

“**I**T’S all very fine,” said Willie Warren to himself, “talking about processions, and bands of music, and bright sunshine and gay banners. The *real* thing is very different from that.”

It is Children’s Day no longer, and we have gone back to the plain matter-of-fact world where young and old together have to live the ordinary every-day humdrum life. Even children have their share of life’s burdens to carry, some of them a very large share, and Willie Warren was no exception.

He was a soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had enlisted under the Banner of the Cross; but instead of marching along in the sunshine, and singing beautiful hymns with hundreds of other children, here he was trudging along a crowded street

one dark wet evening with a heavy basket on his arm. He was plain Willie Warren, errand-boy to Mr. Sykes, grocer and provision dealer.

Yes, the basket was heavy, and the little feet were weary, for they had been on the tramp all day. It was Saturday, and a busy day with Willie. Other days he had to go to school, and could only run his errands in the evening ; but on Saturday Mr. Sykes required his services all the day, and often until nearly midnight ; and Willie would tumble into his bed early on Sunday morning feeling utterly worn out, his limbs often aching too much to allow him to sleep.

"Yes," soliloquised Willie, as he walked along, "I wish it was more like that. It would be far easier than this 'ere, even if we did have to fight real lions and tigers. My ! this basket is 'eavy," and he changed it to the other arm.

"The best part of it would be the music," he went on. "Eh, I do love a band of music ! I'd like to be singing or listening to music all day long," and he trudged on whistling merrily :

"Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war."

No one would think he was tired who heard him whistling, and it helped him along splendidly. The High Street, down which he was going, was always crowded with people on a Saturday night, but he

elbowed his way along, not stopping to look in the windows of the lighted shops, or force his way into every little crowd to see "what was up." Willie had a conscience, and tried to do his duty faithfully. Just now his duty was to carry this basket of provisions to the house of one of his master's customers as quickly as ever he could, for there were many more loads to go out yet, and it was getting late. Mr. Sykes paid him for his time, and if he wasted his time he was robbing his master.

"What's that?" he said to himself as he caught the sound of some music in the distance. "I believe there's some sojers comin' along. Eh, I do hope there is," and he quickened his pace.

"I do believe they are comin' down that street," he said, looking across the road. "I'd like to go and see, but ——"

Here he crossed over, and then found that the merry strains of music were coming from a building at the top of the street in question.

It was a brilliantly lighted music-hall, and Willie immediately turned his head away in disappointment and proceeded on his journey.

"Hallo, Bill Warren," called a boy who was standing in front of the building.

Willie turned round, and perceived a group of his school-fellows, with cigarettes in their mouths, just about to enter the music-hall.

"Here's some fine music, Bill," they said, "you

are fond of music. Come in with us, it's only a penny."

"I ain't done yet," said Willie pointing to his basket. "I've to take these to Virginia Road."

"Bother Virginia Road! Let them wait. I should, if I were you. It's only nine o'clock. Come in for a quarter of an hour. It'll rest yer, and I can tell you the music's fine."

"No," said Willie, "I can't stop, thanks, Dick, and even if I could——"

Willie paused, and turned to go, but the boys were after him.

"'Even if you could,' what?" said Dick, laying hold of Willie roughly by the shoulder. "Finish what you were going to say. Isn't the place good enough for you?"

"No," said Willie, bravely, "I don't think it is a good place. That's not the kind of singing I like. You should come to our Sunday School if you want to hear good singing."

"Ha, ha," the boys laughed. "That's it, is it? Psalm-singing Billy! Let's lay him in the gutter."

In a moment poor Willie was sprawling on his back in the mud, and as he lay stunned for a second, the lamplight shining on his pale upturned face, one could recognise the features of little Theodore Pilgrim.

But he was not Theodore Pilgrim *now*. As we said before, he was plain Willie Warren, errand boy to Mr. Sykes, the grocer; and at this present moment

he lay on his back on the sloppy pavement of the High Street, the parcels entrusted to him all rolling into the gutter. Poor Willie!

He did not *look* very like a hero, lying there on the ground. But he was one for all that, and not a *fallen* one either. He was the *conqueror*, not the *conquered*. On that muddy pavement, in the High Street, Willie Warren had fought a battle for the Lord Jesus Christ. He had nobly resisted temptation, boldly shown his colours, and had gained a splendid victory over self. Now he lay on the ground *as if* defeated; but angels were singing a song of triumph, and the Captain was saying, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

He did not lie there long. Hastily picking himself up, he carefully gathered together the scattered parcels. Was there a tear in his eye? If so, he quickly dashed it away, for Willie was not a cry-baby. He replaced the parcels in the basket to which he had clung,—bacon, cheese, butter, and various packages of groceries, but fortunately no eggs.

"Lucky there ain't no eggs now," he said to himself; "or there would ha' been a squish-squash."

"It's a pity about these togs though," he added as he tried to wipe some of the mud off his clothes. "They were bad enough before. Whatever'll mother say? Perhaps Bessie will help me put 'em right when I get 'ome. But I do think that Dick Stubbins is a mean cad, and ——"

Here there was another pause ; and another battle was silently fought and won. Then our hero set off again on his errand as briskly as possible to make up for lost time. He felt a little stiff and giddy, and the basket seemed even heavier than before, but he soon broke out whistling again :

“Onward, Christian soldiers,
Marching as to war.”

Presently he came to a quieter neighbourhood, and entered a road of respectable villa residences. Some distance along this road he went, still whistling, and then entered a gate and rang a bell at the side door. The cook answered his summons and took his basket from him, Willie leaning against the side of the door to rest himself.

“You are very late to-night,” she said, “here it’s after nine o’clock, and these things was ordered at three.”

“We are very busy on Saturdays, mum,” said Willie, apologetically.

“O, don’t tell me,” said the cook with a toss of her head. “I know better. It’s your laziness, it is. And now, I declare, you’ve not brought all ! Where’s the coffee, you careless boy ? ”

“Coffee, mum ? was there any ordered ? ” said Willie.

“Yes, indeed, to be sure there was. Here it is on the list—‘one pound of coffee’—what have you done with it ? Why haven’t you brought it ? ”

"I've brought all as was give me to bring," said Willie, "they must have forgot that."

"Well, you go straight back and fetch it as quick as you can, do you hear? No loitering on the road now."

"Won't it do on Monday, please mum?" said Willie, remembering he had other calls to make in a widely different direction. "I'll bring it early."

"No it won't do on Monday. We've no coffee in the house for breakfast on Sunday. You go straight back to the shop now and fetch it, and look sharp about it too."

Willie turned away, and the whistle seemed to have gone out of him, as he walked down the road with the empty basket on his arm, and a disconsolate look on his face.

"Well, it can't be helped," he said presently, "and after all it won't take me very long."

Then he slung the empty basket on to his back, and set off at a brisk pace, trying to forget how tired he was, and whistling :

"In the march of life, through the toil and strife
Of the winding path before us,
We have naught to fear with a Saviour near,
And His banner waving o'er us.

"In the Christian race, if we take our place,
We may run and weary never ;
Daily pressing on till the goal be won,
Unto Jesus looking ever."

And the poor weary errand-boy looked into his Captain's face that dreary Saturday evening, and one look brought comfort and gladness to his heart.

"Coffee!" said his master, as Willie entered the shop and told his tale. "Of course there was coffee ordered, and there was coffee sent. I put it in the basket myself. Where is it?"

"I don't know, sir," said Willie tremulously. "I didn't know as it was in the basket. I took all the things as you gave me. I don't remember no coffee."

"Well, it was there, and you'll have to find it. What have you been doing? Larking in the streets, eh?"

"No, sir. I went straight there, sir, and didn't stop for nothing, sir."

Then Willie remembered his encounter at the corner by the music-hall.

"O," he said, "I did 'ave a little upset, and some of the things went out of the basket, but I picked them all up, sir, and they was all right."

"A little upset, indeed! And yet you tell me you went straight there and didn't get into any mischief! I thought *you* at any rate were a truthful boy, but all boys are alike. Where was this 'little upset,' pray?"

"Please, sir, in the High Street, at the corner of Terry Street."

"Then that's where you lost the coffee, I'll be bound. Go straight back there and look for it as

quick as ever you can. Ten to one you won't find it though," he added as Willie ran off like a shot.

Of course no parcel of coffee could be found, and Willie ran back to the shop, panting for breath, and shaking with fatigue.

"Ah, well," said his master, "you must pay for it, that's all. Eighteen-pence off your money, and it'll teach you to be more careful in future. Now take another pound of coffee to Virginia Road as fast as you can, and this basket of things is ready for Cathcart Road; you may as well take it with you, but go to Virginia Road with the coffee first."

The new load was a heavy one,—heavier even than the last; and Cathcart Road was a long way from Virginia Road, and nearer to the shop. Why should he not go there first and get rid of his load, instead of carrying the heavy basket round by Virginia Road?

The master had said, "Go to Virginia Road *first*."

"But it would make no difference in the end, and the master would never know which you took first," said a voice in the ear of the tired errand boy.

"Daily pressing on till the goal be won,
Unto Jesus looking ever."

His Captain's eye was always upon him, whether his master's was or not, and this young soldier would rather endure any amount of fatigue than do a dishonourable action.

"And yet he thinks I told a lie," said Willie sadly

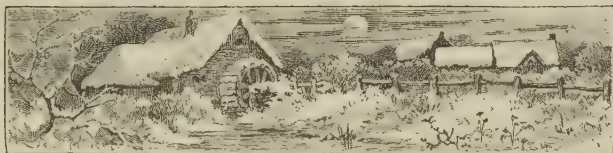
to himself. "But *He* knows I didn't, so it doesn't matter much," and he whistled on :

" Casting all your care on the Lord by prayer,
He will keep your feet from falling ;
You'll the crown obtain, nor have run in vain
For the prize of God's high calling."

As long as he had his Captain's approbation Willie was content, though he liked to please his master too, as far as he was able.

He took the coffee to Virginia Road, the basket to Cathcart Road, and three or four other loads to different places ; and it was half an hour after midnight when he stumbled, rather than walked, up the stairs that led to his mother's room, with a very small proportion of his usual pay in his hand. But there was rest and peace in his heart, for he knew that he had conquered.





A VERY YOUNG SOLDIER.

SURELY you cannot mean this little white-robed mite skipping along the road, her fair curls shining in the sunlight, her cheeks and eyes glowing with health and happiness. Surely she has no battles to fight. Life must be nothing but one long holiday to her.

Let us follow her a little while and see.

"Come along, Mabel, dear," said a lady, who was walking just in front of her, "that is not the way to walk to church. You should not go dancing about like that. Come and take hold of my hand and walk steadily."

Mabel dropped into a more demure pace, and walked very slowly up to her governess.

"Where are your gloves?" said that lady. "Put them on at once, naughty child."

Mabel drew a little pair of white silk gloves from her pocket, and began pushing her chubby fingers

into them; but there was a pout on her pretty face as she did so.

"I don't like gloves, Miss Holmes," she said. "I think the man that made them up was a nasty man."

"He was a very useful man, I think," said Miss Holmes. "What would you do without gloves in the winter? Think how cold your hands would be."

"Yes, I don't mind them in the winter. But why should I wear them in the summer as well? They are no good, and make your hands so hot."

"All ladies wear them."

"But I'm not a lady," said Mabel.

"You want to grow into one, don't you?" said Miss Holmes.

"Like you?" said Mabel, looking archly at her governess.

"Yes, or like your mother."

"I wouldn't mind being like mammie when I grow up. Why didn't she come to church this morning, Miss Holmes?"

"She was not well enough."

"I don't like going to church to-day, Miss Holmes."

"Do not speak like that, Mabel, you are talking foolishly and naughtily. All good people like going to church; and you told me the other day that you had begun to love the Saviour."

"I do love Him," said Mabel, more quietly, "but I don't like church. It's too long."

"Hush!" said Miss Holmes, "here we are."

They entered the church, and took their places in the pew where Mabel's sisters were already seated. The little one sat down by her governess as demure as possible, and the service began.

But it was very hot, and the prayers seemed very long, and the sermon—O, how tired Mabel was! At last, in the middle of the sermon, she heaved a very audible sigh, which made her sisters titter and her governess look at her reprovingly. Then her legs got the fidgets in them. Her feet did not reach the floor of the pew, and she began swaying her legs to and fro till,—quite without meaning it,—one little boot came into violent contact with the seat in front, and startled everybody near with the sudden noise.

"You really must sit still, Mabel," whispered Miss Holmes, angrily.

Altogether Mabel did not enjoy the service, and when they reached home it was reported that "Mabel had been very fidgety in church."

"O, I am sorry to hear that," said her mother.

"I could not help it, mammie, dear," said the little one, coaxingly, "I was so hot and so thirsty, and a fly would keep tickling my legs."

"For shame, Mabel," said the governess, "you are making up excuses."

"I'm *not*, Miss Holmes," said the child, stamping her foot. "It is indeed true, mamma, a fly tickled my legs."

"Darling, you should not speak like that to Miss Holmes. I'm afraid you have been very troublesome this morning. You should try and sit still in church even if you are hot and tired, because it disturbs other people for a little girl to be so restless. And, besides, if you sit still and try to listen, you are more likely to be interested in the service, and perhaps learn some useful lessons. The church is God's House, where He meets with His people. Try to remember that."

"I didn't know He was in the church. I can see Him better in the fields than in the church. I don't believe He was there this morning at all."

"O, Mabel, you naughty child to talk like that," said the governess.

"I'm not naughty, am I, mammie?" said Mabel, nestling up to her mother.

"You do not mean to be naughty, but you are talking recklessly, darling, and speaking not very reverently about God. You know that He is everywhere,—in the church, in the fields, in this room, listening to what you are saying. You let your little tongue run on too fast sometimes, and say some very foolish things. Always remember that God can hear you, and that will make you more careful. And, Mabel, as you were so fidgety in church this morning, you had better not go to Sunday School this afternoon. Stay quietly at home, for it is a very warm day."

Now this was a great trial for poor Mabel. Though

she did not like church she loved Sunday School. She loved her teacher, she loved the Bible lesson, and she liked getting all her attendance marks. When her mother said this, she had to go away alone into some dark corner to have a little cry all to herself, and ask God to forgive her. Then, with tearful eyes, she watched her sisters depart without her, after which she wandered disconsolately into the garden.

Little Mabel rambled round and round the garden, and went from bed to bed, looking at the flowers, smelling the roses, counting the buds. Then she spied a tennis-ball under a tree.

"O, I know," she said to herself, "that's the ball they lost yesterday, and couldn't find anywhere."

She picked it up and carried it on to the lawn, where she began tossing it about. After playing with it for about ten minutes, a sharp tap on the window arrested her. There stood Miss Holmes!

"You wicked girl," she called out, "come in directly! What mischief will you be at next? You quite forget that it is Sunday. Put that ball down, and come in at once."

"Why is it wicked to play at ball on Sunday, Miss Holmes?" said the little girl, as she obeyed her governess.

"What does the fourth commandment say?" asked Miss Holmes.

"Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy," said Mabel,

"Go on ; that is not all."

"Don't remember the rest."

"Then you had better sit down and learn it. Come into the library and write the whole commandment out, and then learn it, and repeat it to me before tea."

She provided Mabel with a Bible, some ruled paper, a pen and ink, and then left her to her task.

Mabel began to write.

"What a long commandment this is," she said to herself with a sigh, "and I don't a bit know what it means. I'm quite sure there is nothing about not playing at ball in it. There! I've put a big S for Sabbath, and there's only a little one. I must cross that out. O, now I've made a smudge! Never mind. It *is* hot in this room, and it is so nice and cool on the shady lawn. I've a great mind to go out again, only Satan might make me want to play with the ball again. He could not make me *do* it, though, for teacher said that when we were God's children we were not slaves to Satan."

Then a merry twinkle came into her eye as she thought, "It would be rather nice to go, just to bamboozle Satan, and show him that he couldn't make me. I believe I will ;" and the volatile child tossed her curls, slipped off her chair, and seizing her large hat she ran from the room, and was soon out on the cool shady lawn.

"It is delicious here," she said, as she threw herself on the grass under the trees. "I wonder

where the ball is. I threw it down just there, I think. I believe I see it, but no, Mr. Satan, I'm not going to touch it."

This was a very young soldier you know, and very ignorant. She really wished to do right, but needed a lot of teaching.

"Now if I could do as I liked," the child went on thinking, "I would have a tent out here this warm weather, and sleep in it, and never go into the house at all. And who would I have with me in the tent? O I would have Mammie, and Lill, and Hilda, and Beryl,—not Miss Holmes. Bother that writing! I have not finished it yet. I suppose I had better go in and do it. How splendidly Lill played tennis yesterday! I was watching them all the afternoon, and ——"

"Mabel!" called a voice from the next garden.

"Is that you, Flossie?" said Mabel, jumping up and running to the wall. "Where are you?"

"Up here in the tree. Do you see one of our tennis-balls in your garden? We have lost one."

"Is this it?" said Mabel, picking up the ball she had played with before.

"I don't know," said Flossie, "toss it up here and let me see."

Mabel threw it up.

"What a bad throw! I only just caught it. Try again, and see if you cannot do better than that," and she tossed the ball back to Mabel.

"Well caught, little one! I see you can catch, if you can't throw."

Mabel was pleased, and did her best to throw the ball back to Flossie.

"That's better," said Flossie, "now try again."

So backwards and forwards went the ball, and they had quite a good game.

"Mabel!"

The child started; it was Miss Holmes' voice. Then she hung her head in shame and confusion as she remembered that instead of "bamboozling" Satan, she had been caught in his wiles.

Behold her, then, after a stern lecture from Miss Holmes, penitently seated at her task in the library, with instructions not to leave her chair till it was finished.

It was laborious work; the room was very quiet and warm; the golden head began to nod, and soon the tear-stained face was laid on the blotted paper, and Mabel was fast asleep.

The door softly opened, and a sweet-faced girl of about fourteen entered. She looked pityingly at the sleeping child, then tenderly lifted her in her arms, and carried her to the couch. Then she looked at the blotted writing and read:

"Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour and do all thy work: but ——"

There it ended. Mabel's task was far from completed.



"They had quite a good game."—Page 52.

"Poor little mite!" said her sister, "I'll finish it for her," and she sat down and wrote on to the end of the commandment, then threw herself into the easy chair with a book.

Mabel stirred, opened her eyes, and gazed rather doubtfully for a moment at the figure in the easy chair. Then she sprang up.

"O Lilian, my sweet precious Lill, have you come home? I am so glad. Do tell me all about it," and she sprang into her sister's lap.

"But haven't you something to do here first?" said Lilian, pointing to the writing on the table.

"O yes," said Mabel, with a downcast look. "I forgot that. And O, Miss Holmes said I was not to get off my chair till I had done it, and I *am* off. What shall I do? I don't remember getting off. I didn't mean to, I am sure."

"No, you little May-blossom, you were asleep and I lifted you off. So that was not your fault at all. But tell me why you had this to do."

Mabel told the story of the afternoon's troubles. Then she said:

"Do you think it is wrong to play with a ball on Sunday? I wonder what Jesus did when He was a little boy. Did He play on the Sabbath day?"

"I don't know," said Lilian; "the Bible does not tell us about that."

"Well, what would *you* do, Lill?"

Lilian thought a minute before answering, then she said :

"Well, pet, for myself I certainly should not think of playing at tennis or any other game on God's holy day. But," she continued, speaking very slowly, "God wants Sunday to be a very happy day for everybody ; and *you* are a very little girl. If you cannot be happy without a ball, then I *think* God would not be grieved if you had a ball."

"I *can* be happy without a ball," said Mabel in an injured tone.

"Just what I thought, pet," said Lilian kissing her. "You are not a baby now, and you love the Lord Jesus, and are old enough to find happiness in reading and thinking about Him, and praying to Him, and learning and singing hymns, and studying Bible stories, and trying to do something to help other people. There are lots of ways in which Sunday can be made a very happy day to those who love Jesus, without toys and playthings."

"I won't play with a ball any more on Sundays," said Mabel.

"I wouldn't if I were you, darling. I think you will find you can be quite happy without. But now I am quite sure that Jesus, our Captain, wishes you to be obedient to Miss Holmes ; and you have not learned this commandment yet. See, I have written it out for you——"

"O you dear, sweet, precious——"

"And I shall ask Miss Holmes to take my writing instead of yours, as you fell asleep by mistake. But now I will help you to learn this."

Mabel set to work in good earnest, and could soon repeat the commandment.

"Where are the others, Lill?" she said when she had finished.

"O, they are not home yet. I came early because I had a headache."

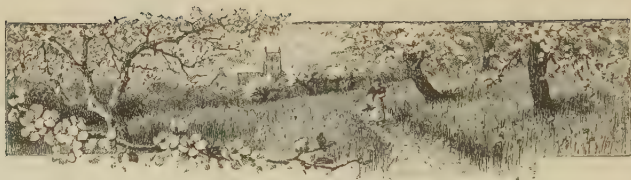
"O, poor Lill! And here you have been teaching me instead of going to lie down. You are a dear, sweet, kind, precious, angelic—I don't know what else—sister."

"Well, you see," said her sister smiling, "I've been making Sunday a happy day for myself by trying to help you."

Mabel gave her another hug, and then ran off to find Miss Holmes.

In this giddy little soldier do you recognise our youngest recruit, little Joy?





A BATTLE OF CONSCIENCE.



LARGE schoolroom, and a crowd of merry chattering girls taking their places for the morning's study.

Two curly heads, a dark one and a fair one, were bent over one desk eagerly conning a difficult page of French grammar from the same book. These two girls were of the same age, did the same lessons, lived next door to each other, and were supposed to be very "thick" friends.

"O, Lilian," whispered the dark-haired one, "I have something to ask you after school. But really I don't think I can wait till then. Shall I say it now?"

"If you like," said Lilian, "but do you think you know this horrid stuff? I don't."

"O, never mind it! We shall scrape through. I want you to come and play tennis with me this evening. You are to come to tea, mamma says, and then we will do our lessons together, and after that we shall get some good games before dark. You'll come, won't you?"

"Thanks, Gwen. I'd like to come very much."

"That's all right then," said Gwen. "I shall expect you."

"Stop a minute," said Lilian, "this is Thursday isn't it. O, I am very sorry, Gwendoline, but I can't come this evening. I'll come another evening if you will let me."

"Why can't you come this evening?" said Gwen in a tone of disappointment.

Lilian turned red, and looked very uncomfortable.

"O, I don't know," she said after a moment's hesitation, "I don't think I can. I'd rather come some other evening, Gwen, if that will do as well."

You must know that Lilian had recently given her heart to Jesus, and she had joined a class for young people, which met on Thursday evenings. This little class-meeting was a great help to her at the beginning of her Christian life, and she had made up her mind that nothing but sickness, absence from home, or some very urgent duty, should keep her away from the weekly meeting.

O, how precious was that Thursday evening hour to those young Christians! In singing, and prayer, and Bible study, and meditation, and conversation, they seemed to get so near to the Captain of their salvation, and to receive from Him fresh supplies of strength and courage to fit them for the conflicts of the week. And should Lilian give up this for a game of tennis?

No one was fonder of playing tennis than Lilian

Ambrose, and any other evening she would have felt quite at liberty to accept her friend's invitation, and throw herself heartily into the game. But it was a choice between the class-meeting and the tennis; and Lilian's young heart chose the former, though she shrank from confessing it to her friend. Gwendoline was not a Christian; Gwendoline would not understand, she argued. And, moreover, how Gwendoline would tease her if she said she preferred to go to class!

"No, another evening will not do as well, Lilian, darling," said Gwen eagerly, "and I'll tell you why. My brother has a half-holiday to-day, and he is going to bring one of his school-fellows in. He says he will help us with our lessons, and then the four of us can have the lawn to ourselves, and have a thorough good practice. The elders are all going out to a dinner party. So now you see why I want you particularly this evening. It will just make up the set, and you play so beautifully, Lilian."

"I'm afraid I must ask you to excuse me this time, Gwen, dear,"—

"No, I won't excuse you," said Gwen petulantly. "There is no reason why you should not come."

"Yes, there is," said Lilian blushing a deeper red. "I have another engagement for this evening."

"Another engagement! I don't believe it, or you would have said so before. Pray what is it?"

"I'm not going to tell you," said Lilian laughing. "You must not want to know all my affairs."

"O, it's a secret, is it? How very mysterious! But I'll find it out," said Gwen, laughing in her turn. Then, just as the governess was entering the room, she whispered in Lilian's ear, "I shall ask Mabel."

"If you do, I'll never speak to you again," said Lilian sharply; for she knew that if Gwen appealed to her chattering little sister the secret would be a secret no longer.

We can imagine that Lilian felt very uncomfortable during the hours of morning school. She avoided Gwen as much as possible; and, indeed, Gwen seemed to be of the same mind and to shun Lilian just as much. It was evident that a coolness had arisen between the girls.

When school broke up for the dinner hour, instead of the two friends walking home together, Lilian made an excuse to go round another way. As soon as she reached home, she ran up to her own little room, shut the door, and sat down to think over the situation.

On Lilian's last birthday, when she was fourteen, her mother had given her this little room all to herself. She had had it fitted up and furnished on purpose for her. There was a light paper on the wall, a neat carpet on the floor, a pretty little bed in one corner, a chest of drawers to hold her clothes,—of which henceforth she was to have the charge herself,—some book-shelves for her books, a few pretty pictures and framed texts on the walls, and a little writing-table in front of the window. The window looked on to

the garden, and from it Lilian had signalled many a message to her friend Gwendoline in the next garden. Very proud and happy Lilian was to become the possessor of such a pretty little sanctum instead of sharing a room with her sisters, as she had done hitherto. But doubly precious had the little room been to her since her conversion. Here she could come for quiet thought and prayer, and reading her Bible. It was no uncommon thing for her to retire to her room for a few moments' quiet during the interval between school and dinner, so that her younger sisters were not surprised that she did not follow them into the garden.

But Lilian was in no very enviable frame of mind now, as she threw herself into the low chair by the open window. She felt herself to be in something of a quandary as regards Gwen and her invitation; and she was a little bit uneasy in her conscience besides.

She was very fond of Gwen; and the one thing for which she prayed and longed more than any other, was that she might be enabled to persuade Gwen to enlist under the same banner as herself.

"I'm afraid I have vexed Gwen," she mused. "She will be mortally offended with me if I don't go this evening. How can I ever win her to the Saviour if I estrange her from me?"

She looked out of the window. There was Gwen, sitting under a tree in the next garden reading a book, as unconcerned as possible.

"She'll get hold of Mabel in a minute," thought Lilian. "Whatever shall I do? I would much, *much* rather go to class; but if it means vexing Gwen, perhaps I had better give it up for this week. I know what I'll do. I'll write her a little note, and get Mabel to give it to her over the wall, for it would be better for her to have it before I see her again."

So she got a sheet of paper out of her writing-case, and wrote :

"DEAR GWEN,—I was only teasing this morning. Of course I will come this evening, and thank you very much for inviting me. Sorry I was in such a provoking humour, but I know you will forgive me.

"Yours as ever,

"LILIAN."

"I am sure it is very self-denying of me," she sighed to herself as she finished. "Gwen little thinks how much I am giving up for her. But O, I do want her to be a Christian!"

"Will that note do anything towards helping her to be a Christian?" said conscience. "In the first place, is it quite truthful?"

"No, I'm afraid it is not quite *strictly* true," said poor Lilian as she read it again, "and what is more, I think Gwen will be sharp enough to know it."

"Moreover," said conscience, "would not Gwen respect your religion more if she knew that you give it the first place, and find more happiness in a religious meeting than in a game of tennis?"

"That is so," said Lilian. "I must decline the invitation and tell her why. O dear, she will be cross, and she will say a lot of horrid things about my going to a class-meeting. I know she will, and tell all the other girls too, and I shall get frightfully teased. Well, I suppose I can bear being 'persecuted for righteousness' sake.' I must learn to 'endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.'"

So Lilian tore up her note, and took another sheet of paper. She paused with the pen in her hand.

"Now, how best can I tell her, so that she will not be offended? Let me see."

After a moment or two she began to write :

"DARLING GWEN,—I am so *very* sorry that I cannot come this evening. As you are my very dearest friend, I will tell you what the engagement is. There is nothing so extraordinarily mysterious about it, only I did not want *all* the girls to know. Of course I have no secrets from *you*, sweet one, so I shall tell you, hoping you won't be cross with me.

"You know, darling, since I became a Christian, Miss Manning has asked me to go to her class, which meets on Thursday evenings. She likes the girls to be very regular in their attendance, and I promised her I would never miss if I could help it. Now you see, dearest Gwen, if I stayed away this evening, and Miss Manning heard that I had stayed away to play tennis, she would be so *very* much disappointed, and it would seem as if I had broken faith with her.

"That is all the 'engagement' I have, Gwen, darling, but you will agree with me that it would be very awkward for

me not to keep it. At the same time I am *awefully* sorry that it happens to be the same evening that you want me.

"Forgive my apparent rudeness this morning, but there was not time to give a proper explanation.

"Your most affectionate friend,

"LILIAN."

"That will do it, I think," said Lilian to herself. "I've made a clean breast of it, and yet she can't possibly be offended. Now where is Mabel? O, there she is in the garden playing with Fido!"

"Pussy, pussy!" she called, putting her head out of the window; and as the little one looked up she said:

"I want you. Come up here a minute, darling."

Presently a little figure in a holland slip and straw hat appeared at the door.

"O, what grimy hands!" said Lilian looking at her. "They'll soil my pretty note that I want you to give to Gwen. Go and wash them in the bath-room, duckie, and then you shall take this letter to Gwen for me, and have a sweet for your pains."

"O, you 'ticular girl," said the child. "I'm bothered if my hands aren't as clean as your note;" and with a roguish smile she departed to the bath-room.

Was Lilian's note quite clean? She had time to read it through again.

"This is no more true than the other," said conscience. "Is it entirely on account of not wishing to disappoint Miss Manning, that you prefer the class-meeting to the tennis party? Have you really made 'a clean breast' of it? Have you boldly

confessed your allegiance to Christ, and determination to 'seek first the kingdom of God'? Have you said anything at all that will be likely to win Gwen to serve under your Captain? Instead of making a bold stand for your Lord, have you not been hiding in a cowardly way behind Miss Manning? While complacently imagining that you were denying self, have you not put self before truth, and even before Christ Himself?"

Lilian hid her face in her hands, and wept bitter tears of mortification, as she listened to the voice of conscience. Then she knelt down and prayed earnestly that God would forgive her selfishness and cowardice, and would give her courage to bear a faithful testimony, and show her how to win her friend for Jesus.

Just then little Mabel knocked at the door.

"My letter was not quite clean, darling," Lilian called out, "and I must write it again. You can run and play, and I will bring it to you when it is ready."

So once more Lilian took a fresh sheet of paper, and, asking God to teach her what to say, she began a third time :

"DEAREST GWEN,—I am very sorry for what occurred this morning. I am sure I behaved in a most provoking manner, and deserve that you should be very angry with me.

"It was wrong of me to make any mystery about my engagement for this evening. You know, dear, that some months ago I gave myself to the Lord Jesus, and since then I have been a member of Miss Manning's class, which

meets on a Thursday evening. It is such a great help to me, Gwen, dear, and I have made up my mind never to miss if I can possibly help it. I enjoy a game of tennis very much, as you know, dear, but O, Gwen, you have no idea how much more happiness is to be found in communion with Jesus !

“O, my dearest Gwen, you don’t know how much I wish that you would go with me to the class-meeting, and learn to love the Saviour too ! Won’t you, dear Gwen ? It would make me so very happy, and it would make you happier than you have ever been, or can ever be without Him. He loves you too, and wants you to be His disciple. I am so very ignorant that I do not know what to say, but if you would come to the meeting Miss Manning would know how to help you. Do, darling ; and forgive my disgraceful behaviour this morning.

“Yours most penitently,

“LILIAN GRACE AMBROSE.”

This letter was given to little Mabel, who handed it over the garden wall to Gwen.

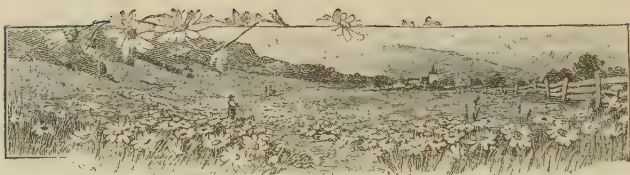
Lilian took her place for afternoon school in some anxiety as to how Gwen would meet her. To her surprise her friend’s place remained empty. Presently, however, Gwen’s little sister Flossie brought her a note. She opened it and read as follows :

“DEAR LILIAN,—Of course I will forgive you. I think you are a foolish little thing, but you mean well. Just going out with the boys, so excuse haste.

“Yours, as ever,

“GWEN.

“P.S.—Perhaps I will come with you some day.”



HOW THE CHILDREN MET MISFORTUNE.



WHEN Lilian Ambrose reached home from afternoon school she encountered, at the gate, a young girl about her own age, who was employed every day in the kitchen.

Lilian, being a Christian girl, had begun to take a kindly interest in others, especially those who seemed in any way to need sympathy and help. A kind word and a smile cost nothing, and yet are cheering as a sunbeam, and have chased away many a shadow from the pathway of those whose lot in life is but a dreary one.

So Lilian stopped to speak a pleasant word to this little maid.

"Well, Bessie," she said, "have you nearly finished for to-day?"

"Yes, miss," said Bessie, blushing. "I've just got to run of an errand or two for cook, and then I'm

done. Cook said as she should spare me early to-day, as mother isn't well."

"O, I'm sorry your mother is not well. What is the matter with her?"

"I don't know, miss, but she gets so tired like. Doctor says she's a killin' herself with hard work. You see she works at the tailorin', and often has to sit up till four o'clock in the mornin', so she 'ardly gets no rest."

"But why does she have to work so hard? Doesn't your father get any money?"

"No, miss, father's run away and left us, he has, an' we are very glad, miss, he used to drink so orful. We gets on much better now without him. But then, of course, mother has to work 'ard, and this week my brother didn't bring 'ome all his money. Mother depends on his money for the rent, an' he had to pay for a pound of coffee, as he lost, and that's put mother out a bit."

"How did he lose it?"

"I don't know, miss, an' he doesn't neither. He is errand-boy at Mr. Sykes', and on Saturday night, somehows, a parcel of coffee was lost out of his basket, so he had to forfeit the money."

"And his money pays the rent, does it?"

"Yes, miss. Willie reckons to pay the rent with what he earns at Mr. Sykes' and other places, and mother pays for the food, and what I earn goes for the clothes, miss," said Bessie, blushing.

"O, that's how you manage, is it?" said Lilian, looking interested.

"Yes, miss, you see I gets clothes give me here, often, as comes in 'andy for me an' the children, so with my wages it's enough to keep us respectable. I'm saving now for a new suit of clothes for Willie. He's hardly fit to be seen on Sundays, an' he wants new boots, too, when I can manage it. But I shall have to make up the rent this week, as Willie is behindhand, so it 'ull take a longer time to save it all. Willie was orful disappointed on Saturday, he was, poor chap, and orful tired too. It is mean to keep them poor boys so late at work; and Willie's only ten years old."

"And how old are you?"

"Thirteen, please, miss."

Lilian seemed amused at the old-fashioned way in which this child-servant talked.

"Are you and Willie the only ones that earn anything, then?" she asked.

"Yes, miss; there is another brother as comes between Willie an' me, but he's away at sea, an' we haven't heard from him for a long time. The others are all too little, miss."

Lilian opened her purse, and took out a shilling and sixpence.

"Will you give these to Willie," she said, "to pay for the pound of coffee, and help to make up the rent?"

"O, miss, you're very kind, but Willie wouldn't like to take it, miss. He does not like to take money he has not earned, miss."

"But he *did* earn it," said Lilian. "It was quite an accident his losing the coffee, and I think he will let me make that up. You take it and ask him."

"Thank you kindly, miss," said Bessie. "I'm sure he'll be much obliged to you, miss."

"Shall I see you at class to-night?" said Lilian, as Bessie was moving away.

"I 'ope so, miss; good evenin', miss," and, blushing, Bessie walked away on her errand.

An hour later, Bessie Warren was on her way home.

"I'm glad she's let me off early," she said to herself, as she hurried along. "It's class night, an' I'll be able to help mother a bit an' straighten up at 'ome afore I goes to class."

Bessie Warren, as well as Lilian Ambrose, had been among those young people who had decided for Christ on the Children's Day, and had been gathered into a junior class led by a zealous and kind-hearted Christian lady.

"I wonder what Willie 'ull say to this money," thought Bessie. "What a nice young lady Miss Lilian do get, to be sure! But, my! how nice it must be to be like her, an' not 'aye to slave so 'ard from mornin' to night! Much easier for her to be good than me;" and she gave a sigh of discontent.

She did not know that Lilian had battles to fight

as well as herself. The enemy is just as zealous in his attacks on the rich as on the poor.

"Well, well," she said, as she drew near her home, "the Lord knows best. He made *her*, an' He made *me*, so He ought to know what's best suited to us. An' He's put her *there*, an' me *here*."

So saying, she opened the door and went in; and the evil spirits of Discontent and of Envy, that had been attacking her on the way home, fled from her, vanquished by faith.

A scene of confusion met her gaze as she entered. The room was in a fearful state of disorder. The table-cloth was on the floor, and pieces of broken dinner-plates and dishes were strewn about. The children were all crying, and no mother was to be seen.

"Why, what's the matter, what's the matter?" said Bessie. "What's all this noise about? Why is my baby crying like this? And where's mother?"

She rushed to the cot, took up the crying infant, and tried to soothe him.

"Adar Ann," she said, sharply, but not unkindly, "why don't you attend to him, and what's the matter with you all? Can't you speak?"

Ada Ann—or Adarann, as she was usually called—was the oldest of the group, a queer-looking child of seven. She had short, straight hair of a reddish tinge, large round eyes, a snub nose, and a freckled face. She was standing against the wall, holding

her pinafore to her face, looking too much frightened to move. Two younger children, Frederick and Caroline, sat on the floor howling.

When Bessie had settled herself in a chair with the baby in her arms, they all crowded round her, and, with sobs and tears, all began to tell the story at once. The only words that Bessie could distinguish were "father" and "money-boxes," but that was enough to fill her with dismay.

She got up in haste and went to the cupboard, on the top shelf of which the money-boxes were kept. There was mother's box, neatly labelled in Willie's round school-boy hand, "Food, coals, and candles;" there was Bessie's, labelled "Clothes;" and there was Willie's, labelled "Rent." Besides these, there was a fourth box, that Willie had recently brought home from Sunday School—a missionary box—which already had a few coins in it. The four boxes were all gone!

Poor Bessie was horrified. All their earnings, all that they had to depend on for the household expenses was stolen—stolen by their own father. As she stood looking at the empty shelf, the demons of Anger and Hatred hit hard at her.

"Now, Adarann, can't you tell me quietly just what has 'appened. Fred'rick and Carryline, do stop that noise. Where is mother, Adarann?"

"In there asleep," said the child, pointing to a door leading into an inner room,

"When did father come in?"

"At dinner-time. He talked very loud at mother, and when she tried to keep him off the money-boxes he struck her. An' then, an' then——"

"Well, go on; what then?"

"Then she went in there, an' he went after her. Then he comes out an' locks the door, an' puts the key in his pocket. An' then he gets the money-boxes and bangs out, swishing the clorf off o' the table, an' all the things broke; an' we was all frightened, an' we called mother, an' called, an' called, an' she never heard."

Bessie looked frightened too. She got up and went to the door of the inner room, and tried to open it. She called her mother, applied her ear and eye to the key-hole, but could discover nothing.

"Adarann," she said, "you run down an' ask Mrs. Felton to come up here sharp."

Mrs. Felton was the landlady, and came up at once, with her bonnet and shawl on.

"Well, I never!" she said, when she heard the whole story. "I've been out all day, only just got in, or I should have heard the children crying. I 'spects they've 'ad no tea, poor things. But we must get that door open some'ow. I'll get some one to force the lock. I only 'ope he's not gone an' murdered her."

This did not tend to reassure poor Bessie. While Mrs. Felton was away she fed the baby with some milk she found in a tea-cup, and tried to hush him to sleep.

The landlady soon returned with a policeman and another man. At sight of the policeman the children were frightened, and began to howl again.

"Can't yer take those kids away somewhere," he said to Bessie. "This is no place for them."

"Take them into my room, Bessie," said Mrs. Felton, "an' give them some bread an' butter. There's some on the table."

So Bessie took the little ones away, and soon pacified them with some food, all the time fighting a terrible battle with her foes.

"If he has killed her, how can I forgive him? O Lord, help us, help us," she prayed.

After half an hour of terrible suspense, Mrs. Felton came in, and said :

"Well, she's not dead. She'd only swooned. He'd knocked her down an' then kicked her, an' as she was ill before, she's very bad, an' they are taking her to the 'orspital. So you'll 'ave to manage without her for a bit."

Manage without mother! How could they? But there was no time to think at present. These four little children were dependent on Bessie now. When she returned to their own room, after her mother's departure, the clock struck seven,—the hour for the class-meeting to begin. Could she go and leave these helpless little ones? No, not for one moment did she think of it; and yet she gave a little sigh of regret, for she dearly loved the class-meeting.

"The Lord wants me *here* to-night," she said. "He doesn't want me there, an' if I went He wouldn't give me no blessin'; an' He can bless me here, He can."

So she laid the baby to sleep in his cot, then set to work to tidy the disordered rooms. Just as she had finished, and made the place look neat and comfortable again, the door opened, and our friend Willie appeared.

He was considerably astonished to hear what had happened in the home during his absence.

Then he and Bessie had to review the situation. Father and mother both gone, no food in the house and no money, and six mouths to feed. The brother and sister looked at one another in silent dismay.

"Bessie," said Willie, "God 'ull take care of us. We had better just tell Him all about it."

"Yes, I think we'd best do that first of all," said Bessie, "an' then p'raps He'll show us how to do."

"Now, you kids," said Willie, "listen 'ere. We've got no father and mother for a little bit, an' we don't know how to get any breakfast or dinner, so we are goin' to kneel down an' ask Jesus to be our father an' mother, shall us? Now, Carryliny, you shut the door, an' then come an' kneel down."

So the five children went on their knees, and Willie prayed:

"O God, father's been 'ome, an' he's hurted mother an' stole all our money, an' we thank Thee mother isn't killed, an' O, do please make her well very quickly;

an' 'elp Bessie an' me to take care of the little ones while she's gone, an' show us how to get food to eat, an' 'elp us all to be good an' to love Jesus an' fight all that is wrong. Amen."

Then they got up; and Willie, who believed in practical Christianity, took his cap, and said:

"Look 'ere, Bess, while you get the kids to bed, I'll go out an' see if I can earn some breakfast for the mornin.' All the shops are shut, as it's early-closin' night, but I'll run round to the station an' see if I can get a job."

When he came back it was nearly nine o'clock. He laid a loaf of bread and a penny on the table.

"There, Bess," he said, "that's all; but it 'ull be enough for our breakfast, an' the penny 'll buy some milk for the baby. I don't know what we'll do for dinner."

"O, Willie," said Bessie, eagerly, "you needn't 'ave gone out! I'd quite forgot. Miss Lilian sent this for you," and she handed him the coins Lilian had given her.

"Well, that does come in 'andy now, to be sure," said Willie. "See how God provides beforehand, Bess. He knew we should be wanting it."

Then they had a consultation, which resulted in the decision that Willie should go round and ask Mrs. Ambrose to spare Bessie for a few days, as she could not very well leave the children.

"We shall lose my money," said Bessie, "but it

can't be helped. There's the baby, you see, and Carryliny is too little to go to school, and Adarann's too young to be of any use."

Mrs. Ambrose was very kind when she heard of the misfortune that had happened in her little maid's home. When Willie returned he told Bessie that Mrs. Ambrose said she might have a fortnight's holiday; very likely by that time her mother would be back. Then Willie produced a handful of money, and laid it in Bessie's lap.

"An' she's sent you your wages for this week an' the two next, while you're away."

"How good of her!" said Bessie. "O, Willie, we shall get on finely now. God has heard our prayer already."

So, for the next fortnight, Bessie plodded away at the commonplace duties of minding the children and cleaning the house, and mending the clothes. No class-meeting or prayer-meeting for her; but, as she told the children stories about Jesus, and taught them to sing hymns and to pray, she knew that she was winning her Captain's smiles by faithful, loving service.

"How well that girl do manage, to be sure!" said Mrs. Felton to a neighbour. "She's that patient and good-natured, and sensible-like, you wouldn't believe! An' they do say as she's a Christian. I wish my Sairey Jane was more like her, that I do."



“SINGLE, YET UNDISMAYED.”

T was a half-holiday at the Grammar School, and troops of boys in cricketing flannels had made their way to the field for a game.

The play went on briskly for a time, although it was a very warm afternoon. They were practising for a match that had been arranged for the next Saturday.

When the play was over the boys had collected in a group, and were eagerly talking over the chances of the Grammar School Eleven against their opponents, when they noticed a very old man leaning on the palings, watching them.

He was a curious-looking, quaintly-dressed figure, and his long, shaggy white hair fell from under his broad-brimmed hat right on to his shoulders.

“Good afternoon, young gents,” he said, when he saw they had noticed him. “It’s a very warm day, and I have come a long way, and am just having

a rest on the road. I hope you are all on the road to heaven, young gents?"

The boys stared at one another, and made various comical grimaces. Some touched their foreheads significantly, and winked, as much as to say, "He is crazy." Then there was a chorus of rude laughter.

This was more than one of the boys could stand. His name was Dennis Steadman, and he was about fourteen years old. With flushed cheeks he stood out from the group and spoke to the old man.

"On the road to heaven, did you say, sir? Yes, I hope we all are. At any rate *I* am, for one."

"Ah," replied the old man, "you cannot start on that road too soon. I am nearly at the end of the journey now. When you get as far on the road as I am, your only regret will be that you did not start sooner. Good day, young gents!" and with that he passed on.

"Well, I never!"

"Did you ever hear anything so cracked!"

"Clean off his dot, as I'm alive!"

"And Steadman, here, setting up for a saint!"

"Yes, Steadman ought to be a parson."

"He is much too good for a Grammar School boy."

"Yes, he is too good for us, or at any rate we are not good enough for him. I wonder such a saint should associate with ordinary mortals."

"I don't see why you should sneer at me because

I said I was on the way to heaven," said Steadman in a husky voice. "Are you not all on the road to heaven? If not, on what road are you?"

"O dear! a little more preaching, ch! He has not had quite enough. He likes the taste of it so well that he wants to give us a little more. This is too bad on a half-holiday. It is not Sunday, please, your reverence."

"I guess we are on as good a road as he is," said another, who seemed to be the ringleader. "Let him go his own way, you fellows, since our road is not good enough for him. Let him go his way, and we'll go ours."

And the group of boys closed in and walked off together, singing:

"You can work it out by fractions, or by simple rule of three,
But the way of Tweedle-dum is not the way of Tweedle dee:
You can twist it, you can turn it, you can plait it till you drop,
But the way of Pilly-Winkie's *not* the way of Winkie-Pop!"

Steadman was left alone.

He picked up his bat with a sigh and walked off the field. When he had got a few yards along the road he heard a step behind him, and was presently joined by a boy rather younger than himself. He had bright, merry eyes, and a good-natured face.

"That is a very nice bat of yours, Steadman," he said. "Let's have a look."

Then followed the usual questions: "Where did you get it?" "How much did it cost?" etc. So the

conversation went on merrily till they drew near to Steadman's house.

"Will you come in and see my guinea-pigs, Harry?" he said to his new friend.

Harry was nothing loth, and the two boys spent a pleasant time in the garden together till the dressing-bell rang and warned Dennis it was time for him to go in and get ready for dinner.

In a few minutes he entered the dining-room, where a lively family party was gathering round a well-appointed dinner-table. The party consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Steadman, their eldest son Percy, three daughters, Dennis, and two visitors, a Mr. Westerman—a business friend of Mr. Steadman's—and his son Edward.

Dennis sat next to his father. When the dessert was put on the table his father said :

"Dennis looks rather pale this evening. He had better have a glass of wine." And he began pouring some wine into Dennis' glass.

"No, thank you, father," said Dennis, pushing it from him, "I would rather not. I am quite well."

"Take a little, my boy," said Mr. Steadman. "It will do you good."

"No thank you, father," he said earnestly in a low voice ; "you know I don't take wine."

"Not as a rule," said his father, "but you will take a little occasionally when I wish it. Drink that half-glass."

Dennis said no more, but went on cracking the nuts on his plate, while his father talked to Mr. Westerman.

Presently there was a pause in the conversation, and Mr. Steadman looked at Dennis and said :

"Why are you not drinking your wine, my boy?"

"Indeed, father," he said, "I cannot, I *must* not. You know I am *pledged*."

His mother now spoke from the other end of the table.

"O, father, do not tease the boy. Dennis has got a lot of new-fangled notions just now."

"What 'new-fangled' notions?" said his father sternly.

"O," said the mother, laughing, "he has joined the Young Abstainers' Union, the Christian Endeavour Society, and Bible Reading Association, and all sorts of queer concerns."

"O, mother!" interrupted Dennis.

"In fact," continued his mother, "he has got quite 'a rage' on for religion just now. It will do him no harm while it lasts."

"Well, I hope he has not joined a Society for Disobedience to Parents," said his father.

"No, father," said Dennis. "You know you gave your consent to my becoming a Young Abstainer."

"But, as I understand it, that refers only to wine as a beverage. You can take it medicinally without breaking your pledge."

"I do not require it medicinally," said Dennis, feeling very uncomfortable. "I am quite well; and unless it were distinctly ordered by a doctor I should think it wrong to take wine."

"Well, I shall not force you to take it if you have conscientious scruples about it, Dennis," said his father; "but I am very much displeased with you for pretending to know better than your father, and you had better leave the room."

Dennis rose from the table. His cheeks flushed with the indignity that his father had put upon him in the presence of visitors. What would Mr. Westerman and his son think of his being sent out of the room like a naughty child?

He retired to his own bedroom, and stood at the open window, his fingers drumming on the windowsill, while many conflicting thoughts passed through his mind. He keenly felt his position. He was only a lad of fourteen, and yet both at home and at school he had to stand alone. It was but recently that he had given his heart to God and enlisted under the banner of the King of kings, and though he was very earnest in his resolve to do what was right and stand up for his Master, he sometimes felt that it was an unequal struggle. He seemed to be single-handed against all the world,—that is, all *his* world. His parents, though conforming to a certain extent to the outward observances of religion, knew nothing of conversion, and did not understand the new life and

aspirations that had entered the soul of their younger son. His schoolmates were utterly thoughtless about such matters, leaving them to "a more convenient season."

We cannot wonder that Dennis was sometimes tempted to give up the contest; and now, as he stood looking out on the peaceful twilight of the summer evening, the enemy smote him sorely, till he had pushed him right up into a corner.

"What is the use of going on like this?" said the evil one. "You are displeasing your parents, and making yourself unpopular with your school-fellows. If you carry it on much longer, you will not have a friend left."

"Yes, I have *Jesus*," said Dennis. "He will stand by me, if every one else casts me off."

"Did He stand by you this evening?" said the tempter. "You certainly had the worst of it at dinner-time. You and your religion were both made to look foolish in the eyes of all present."

"I cannot help that," said Dennis. "I did what I thought was right, and God will take care of the rest."

"But, come, now, are you not rather young to set up yourself as knowing better than your parents?"

"I do not pretend to know more than they do, or than they *might* do. I only know what I have learned from God's Word, which is theirs as well as mine. God's Word says: 'Seek ye *first* the Kingdom of God.'"

"But you are only a lad. The whole of life is before you. Why not be content to be guided by your parents while you are under their control? and when you have grown up into a man you can make your own choice, and take what course seems best to you. Leave the responsibility with your parents for the present."

"But *God* has put the responsibility upon *me*," said Dennis. "He says: 'My son, give Me thy heart.'"

"You are fond of quoting Scripture," said the tempter, "does it not also say: 'Honour thy father and thy mother'?"

"I do try to honour them; but Jesus Christ Himself, when He was a boy, said to His mother: 'What have I to do with thee? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?' The heavenly Father's claims come before those of the earthly parents."

"But it says also plainly: 'Children, obey your parents,'—that refers to earthly parents."

"*'In the Lord.'* I will obey them 'in the Lord,'" said Dennis faintly; for the young soldier was getting weary of the conflict.

He was longing for the next half-hour to pass away, for then it would be time to start for the weekly Bible-class. There he would find fresh encouragement for the contest, and strength to withstand all the fiery darts of the enemy.

The adversary saw that he was gaining some

advantage, so he renewed his attacks with increased vigour, till he had almost forced Dennis to throw down his weapons,—his "shield of faith," and his "sword of the Spirit,"—which he had been using so bravely.

"Well, now," said the enemy at last, "just consider a moment how much happier you would be if you gave up trying to be a Christian for the present. Think how much pleasanter and easier your life would be. You are as fond of fun as most boys. You like having plenty of friends. It is so nice to be liked and admired, and to have your company sought by others, instead of being shunned and regarded as 'too good for ordinary society.' There are some very nice fellows at school, who would soon 'chum' with you if you gave up these notions. It is much pleasanter to be popular. And at home you would have a much easier time of it. In fact, you would be happier altogether."

Alas, poor Dennis! "Happier!" would he be? "Pleasanter! easier!" Yes, certainly. It is pleasanter to walk on a broad road leading downwards than on a narrow road leading upwards. It is easier to swim with the stream than against it. A garden of roses is pleasanter than a battle-field. To follow the multitude to do evil is easier than to fight, single-handed, for the right. But must a soldier look for a life of pleasure and ease? Did not God's Word bid him "*endure hardness* as a good soldier of Jesus Christ"?

"Dennis, Dennis! Where are you?"

It was the voice of his youngest sister, Gladys, calling him.

"Here, Gladys! Do you want me?" he said, opening the door of his room.

"Mamma wants you. She wants you to go to the concert with Ethel and Violet. Percy has an engagement, and cannot go."

"I have an engagement too for this evening," said Dennis.

"You? What engagement have you? Only some lessons, I suppose. You can do those in the morning."

"No, it is my Bible-class this evening."

"O, *that* can be put off! A concert is much nicer than a Bible-class. Besides, mamma says you are to go. She wants you to get ready at once."

"Where is mother?" said Dennis.

"She is in the drawing-room. I am just going down."

Dennis did not feel inclined to show his face in the drawing-room, after being dismissed in disgrace by his father. Besides, he was a little bit of a coward just now.

"Look here, Gladys," he said, "if you are going down, do you mind reminding mother that it is the evening for the Bible-class, and say I shall be very glad if she will excuse me from going to the concert."

"All right," said Gladys, who was a good-natured

child. "But you are a silly fellow, Dennis. Don't I wish I had the chance of going to the concert?"

Presently she danced up again.

"Mamma is very sorry," she said, "but as Percy cannot go, she is obliged to ask you to go with the girls."

"O, well," said Dennis to himself. "there is no help for it. I cannot disobey again this evening. I shall miss the help of the Bible-class, and I needed it so much. Perhaps, after all, God is letting these stumbling-blocks be put in my way to show that I am going a little farther than is necessary with my religion."

Ah, Dennis, take care. Instead of leading you to relax your energies, difficulties are sent to inspire you with greater earnestness, and make you put forth more vigorous efforts to overcome; that so you may be the stronger and better Christian soldier.

Dennis was drawing on his gloves in the passage, waiting for his sisters, when his father and Mr. Westerman came out of the dining-room to go to the drawing-room. Mr. Westerman stopped when he saw Dennis, went up and laid his hand kindly on the boy's shoulder, saying, in a low voice:

"God bless you, my boy! You taught me a lesson at dinner-time that I shall not soon forget."

Dennis looked up gratefully, and Mr. Westerman turned away to follow his host.

"I am glad I stood out," thought Dennis; but he

was still feeling very much downcast and depressed. In the concert-hall he scarcely heard the music, so absorbed was he in his own thoughts. He did not notice that the first part of the programme was sacred, till a splendid contralto voice began to sing Handel's beautiful music to "He was despised and rejected of men, a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

Dennis listened entranced. He had never heard such music before. It thrilled him through and through. And they were singing about *his* Saviour, *his* Master, *his* Captain, *his* King! A "Man of Sorrows,"—"despised and rejected,"—"acquainted with grief,"—"hiding not His face" from shame and spitting! Should the servant be above his Lord? Should the soldier have an easier time than his Captain? Should the subject be esteemed more highly than the King?

Ah, Dennis was braced for the conflict once more! In the thought of his "despised and rejected" Master, he had got the stimulus he needed. The Captain of his salvation, Himself "made perfect through suffering," was able also to succour them that are tempted. In the suffering but conquering Saviour, in the once despised but now glorified Redeemer, he recognised the earnest of his own final victory, should he remain "faithful unto death."

When he got home he took out his motto card, on which were the words, "I am determined not to know anything among men, save Jesus Christ and

Him crucified," with his own name affixed nine months before. He took a pen, and, underneath the signature, he wrote his name again, with the date ; and then, on his knees, once more renewed his vows to be "Christ's faithful soldier and servant to his life's end."

Jesus had suffered and died for him. He would suffer, and, if needs be, *die* for Jesus. While preparing for bed, he softly sang :

" Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free ?
No, there's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for me.

" That consecrated cross I'll bear
Till death shall set me free ;
And then go home my crown to wear,
For there's a crown for me."

And so the fight was ended for the present ; and Dennis Steadman had come off "*more* than conqueror." Not only was the enemy defeated, but Dennis himself was stronger and happier and better equipped for future conflicts because of that night's victory,—victory gained, not in his own strength, but in the might of his glorious Captain, Jesus Christ.





CLIFFORD'S CONFLICT.

“**W**HERE is Clifford?” said the Rev. Morgan Holmes, as he entered his sitting-room one chilly evening in August, at about seven o'clock.

His daughter Alice, the only occupant of the room, answered him. She was a bonny girl of sixteen; Clifford was a year older, and there was an older sister, who was governess to little Mabel Ambrose. Their mother was dead.

“He has gone upstairs,” said Alice. “I don’t think he is very well, papa. He was in to tea, but had had a fall from his bicycle and hurt his leg, and directly after tea he went to his room.”

“Hurt his leg, do you say?” said Mr. Holmes hurriedly. “I thought he was going with me to the prayer-meeting, but perhaps he had better not go out. Just get me the class-book you will find on my study

table, Lallie ; I have a class to meet after the prayer-meeting, and shall be late home."

Alice ran for the book, then helped her father on with his coat, as the evening was wet, and was just opening the door for him to go out when there was a shout on the stairs.

"Is that you, father? I'm just ready."

"Ah, Clifford, my boy," said Mr. Holmes, stopping on the door-step, "I thought you were not coming to-night. If you have hurt your leg, would it not be better to rest it?"

"O, it is nothing, father. It pained me before tea, but I have been resting it since, and it feels better. I particularly want to be at the prayer-meeting to-night, for Ted Westerman promised me he would go."

"Well, I shall be glad of your company, my son, if you are sure it is prudent for you to go."

"Quite, father," said Clifford, looking relieved, and soon they were on their way to the chapel.

Ted Westerman had kept his promise, and Clifford was glad he had not stayed away. When some of the older members had prayed, the young voice of the minister's son was raised in earnest supplication. He prayed for opportunities to work for God, and for grace and strength to use the opportunities when given. He prayed for his young friend, though not by name, and for all who were "halting between two opinions." He prayed for God's abundant blessing

on the services of the coming Sabbath day, and for divine guidance and direction in all the events of life. In conclusion, he solemnly re-dedicated his life to the service of his King, and pleaded that God's will might be perfected in him and by him.

After the prayer-meeting, Clifford walked home with Ted Westerman, and engaged in earnest conversation with him. As they parted at the gate, Ted grasped his hand, and said :

" Well, Clifford, you are the bravest fellow I know. No one else would have dared to talk to me as you have done to-night. You are certainly not ashamed of your colours, and I have more than half a mind to throw in my lot with you. If all Christians were like you, I should not hesitate a moment. But I will think over what you have said, and if you see me at the prayer-meeting next week, you will know I have decided to be a Christian."

" Why take a week to think it over ? " said Clifford. " You do not know what may happen in a week. The Saviour did not take a week to think about offering Himself for *you*. Come to Him now, Ted ; this moment yield yourself to Him, and take Him for your Saviour and King. He is very near, and will never be nearer than at this moment. Why rob Him of even one hour of your life, when the whole of it is His by right ? "

Ted was touched. His heart was too full for utterance. The Spirit of God was evidently striving

with him. Once more grasping his friend's hand he turned indoors.

This young fellow had caused his friends much anxiety. As he grew older, he seemed to throw off more and more all the religious restraints of his boyhood, and to be going fast on the road to a godless and dissipated manhood. No one had been able to influence him for good till Clifford Holmes had become acquainted with him. He had liked Clifford from the first, and the intimacy had been encouraged, but none of his friends had dared to hope for so blessed a result to follow so soon.

"I do believe that Ted is coming to Jesus," said Clifford to himself; and his heart was so full of thankfulness, that it was no wonder he forgot the pain in his leg, as he limped half a mile further to see a sick Sunday scholar. From there he went back to the chapel to join his father, and tell him the good news about Ted. Finding his father had gone, he started for home alone, and then followed half an hour of frightful agony.

Every time his foot touched the ground he suffered tortures. He clung to the walls and the railings as he went along, and the damp perspiration stood on his forehead, and his whole frame quivered with pain. At last home was reached, and poor Clifford threw himself on to the couch in a half-fainting condition.

His father helped him up to bed, and the next morning, after a sleepless night, the doctor was

summoned. He looked grave ; said he ought to have been called in at first, and that Clifford had no business to have taken such a long walk after his fall.

In a few days an eminent surgeon was called in in consultation, and after careful examination the verdict was given. Very tenderly the father broke the news to the boy after the doctors had left. The limb had been permanently injured, and Clifford would never walk again without the help of crutches.

Then, at his own desire, Clifford was left alone. He lay very still for some time with closed eyes, and presently some great tears found their way from under the eyelids, and fell on to his pillows,—tears that no amount of pain had been able to call forth.

To understand just what poor Clifford was suffering, it is necessary to know that he had certain plans for his life, and the verdict of the doctors meant the upsetting of all these arrangements.

Ever since his conversion it had been Clifford's one ambition to become a Missionary. After leaving school, he had devoted himself to study with this object in view, and was hoping, in another year or so, to enter upon a college course to fit him for the ministry. Now, in one dreadful moment, all these plans had been frustrated, and Clifford's couch became a battle-field. For a short space of time God's will and Clifford's will were opposed. God's purposes and Clifford's purposes clashed together. Sorely the conflict raged for a time, and then the boy stretched

out his hand and took a small book from the table near him. He opened it and read :

“Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
However dark it be !
Lead me by Thine own hand,
Choose out the path for me.

“I dare not choose my lot,
I would not if I might :
Choose Thou for me, my God,
So shall I walk aright.

“The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine : so let the way
That leads to it be Thine,
Else I must surely stray.

“Not mine, not mine the choice
In things or great or small :
Be Thou my Guide, my Strength,
My Wisdom, and my All.”

The room was very quiet, and no sound seemed to stir in the house. The firelight flickered gently on the walls. On the table near the window were his books—the books that he was studying, with his father's help, in preparation for the ministry. Only a week ago, he was working hard at that table before going out for the ride which ended so disastrously. What would be the use of all these studies now? He must turn his attention to something quite different, unless he meant to be dependent on his father all his life. There were so few occupations open to him now,—so few professions or trades in which a cripple could compete!

“I would rather die,” he said to himself.

And then he remembered :

“ Not mine, not mine the choice.”

Over and over again he read the verses, and then he laid the book on the table, and covered his face with his hand. The tears again fell and trickled through his fingers, but there was nothing passionate or rebellious about them now. Calm was succeeding to storm,—the calm of conquest over self, the calm of submission to a Higher Power.

And so his father found him when he returned home at nine o'clock.

“ Well, my son,” he said, when he had given him his medicine, “ what sort of a time have you had ? ”

“ Father,” said Clifford, “ I suppose I must accept the doctor's decision as final.”

“ I'm afraid so, Clifford.”

“ Well, then, of course I must give up all idea of being a Missionary ? ”

“ Yes,” said his father, “ I knew you would be thinking about that, Clifford, and I have been praying for you, that God would help you to bear the disappointment.”

“ Thank you, father ; He has helped me. It has been a hard struggle, but I think He has given me the victory.”

“ I know, my poor boy, how your heart has been set on this thing. It is a great disappointment to me as well, and would have been to your mother if she

had lived. We had neither of us any higher ambition for our only son, than to see him devote his life to the work of preaching the Gospel. At your birth we dedicated you to God, and prayed that, if your life were spared, you might become one of His ministers. But truly, God's ways are not our ways, nor His thoughts our thoughts. He evidently has other plans concerning you, Clifford, than those which our short-sighted wisdom had arranged."

"But, father, there is just one thing I want to ask. You know how this has been almost a passion with me. I have felt as if I could brave any dangers, and risk life itself, to go and preach the Gospel to the poor heathen. I have thought about it and prayed about it night and day. Is not such a strong desire given by God, and if so, why does He give the desire if He does not mean to satisfy it?"

"Certainly all true missionary zeal is implanted by God. He has given you the desire to work for the heathen, but who says that desire is not to be satisfied? You can help the missionary cause in other ways than by going abroad, help it, perhaps, even more extensively. There is a spice of adventure about a missionary career, and we must be careful not to mistake the mere love of adventure for the missionary spirit. I do not think you have done so, and now you will be able to prove your own heart in this matter. It is the glory of God alone that you seek, my son, is it not?"

"Ay," said Clifford softly.

"The kingdom that I seek
Is Thine : so let the way
That leads to it be Thine."

"Yes," said his father. "Let God choose the way in which you are to serve Him. You know those passages in our Covenant Service :

"'Make me what Thou wilt, Lord, and set me where Thou wilt. Let me be a vessel of silver or gold, or a vessel of wood or stone. If I be not the head, or the eye, or the ear, one of the nobler and more honourable instruments Thou wilt employ, let me be the hand, or the foot, one of the most laborious, and lowest, and most contemptible of all the servants of my Lord. Let my dwelling be in the dust, my portion in the wilderness, my name and lot amongst the hewers of wood or drawers of water, among the door-keepers of Thy house ; anywhere, where I may be serviceable. I put myself wholly into Thy hands. Put me to what Thou wilt ; rank me with whom Thou wilt. Put me to doing ; put me to suffering. Let me be employed for Thee, or laid aside for Thee ; exalted for Thee, or trodden under foot for Thee. Let me be full, let me be empty ; let me have all things, let me have nothing ; I freely and heartily resign all to Thy pleasure and disposal.'"

While his father slowly and reverently repeated these words, Clifford lay with his face hidden in his hands, and then followed a long silence.

"You repeated those words at the beginning of the year, my son," said Mr. Holmes gently, laying his hand on the boy's head ; "can you abide by them now ?"

"Yes, father," said Clifford, "I can. Thank you for reminding me of them. I will read them over again."

"God has a work even for a lame boy. Your future is hidden from us, and this seems a mysterious dispensation, but it is God's arrangement, and is to work out His will. He will show you, step by step, what is His will concerning you. But now you must not talk any more to-night. I must go and send you some supper."

"Have you been to the prayer-meeting, father, and was Ted Westerman there ?" said Clifford eagerly.

"Yes, Ted Westerman was there, and he is coming to see you to-morrow."

"Thank God !" murmured Clifford.

"Ah, it has been a long, sad week for you, my boy. This would not have happened if you had not gone to the prayer-meeting last week. I wish you had stayed at home."

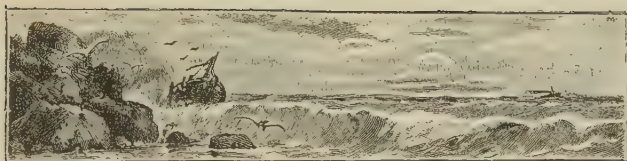
"I don't, father," said Clifford brightly. "I am not at all sorry that I went. Think of Ted."

Two months later, Clifford was at the prayer-meeting again, a pair of crutches was in the corner behind him, but his face was full of gladness and thanksgiving.

By his side was his friend, Ted Westerman, and his face too shone with gratitude and joy. Ted had enlisted as a soldier of the Cross, and was girding on his armour for active service in the field. Clifford had managed to fire his friend with his own zeal for missions ; and now it was the purpose of Ted's life, as it had been of Clifford's, to devote himself to the work of preaching the Gospel in heathen lands. Ted was a fine, clever, attractive young fellow, vigorous in mind and body, and of winning manners.

"O, father," Clifford had said when he heard of Ted's determination, " God's way is the best after all. Ted will be much more successful as a missionary than I could ever have been. He is so much cleverer and stronger, and can talk and get hold of people so much better than I could. By helping to bring in that one recruit, I feel that I have glorified God as much as if I had saved my leg, and gone out as a missionary."





ALICE IN THE FIELD.



ALICE HOLMES had just returned from an afternoon's visiting in her district. She was very tired, and was on her way to her room to take off her hat and cloak before going down to make tea for her father.

As she passed the study door, it opened, and her father called her in.

"I want to speak to you, Alice," he said.

Alice went into the study, and was there for about ten minutes. When she came out, she ran upstairs into her own room and shut the door. She opened a small leather case that was on the table, and took from it a picture of her mother, which she pressed to her lips, and then threw herself on to the bed, in a passion of weeping. She lay there for some time, sobbing violently. Then there came a knock at the door.

"Who's there?" called Alice.

"Please, miss, tea is on the table, and the master's waiting."

"Is my brother there?"

"Yes, miss, they are waiting for you."

"Please say I am not coming down. My head aches. I don't want any tea to-night."

"Shall I bring you a cup upstairs, miss?"

"No, thank you, Ann."

Ann went downstairs, and Alice gave way to her grief once more.

In about half-an-hour's time she heard the bell ring for family prayer, which they usually had after tea. She heard Ann go into the room, and now they were having prayer, and she was not there to give her father the Bible. Yes, they were having prayer without her, and they were going to sing a hymn too! Clifford was playing over the tune. She knew exactly what it was:

"How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ears;
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,
And drives away his fears."

How strange it sounded! Only her father's voice, and Clifford's, with a few little squeaky notes from Ann. Surely they must miss her! And yet they did not seem to care. They went all through the hymn just as usual.

How cosy those tea-hours had been! She had enjoyed the comfortable meal every evening, and

then the family prayers with her father and brother ; but now all this was over. Things would never be the same again.

The rattle of cups and saucers downstairs reminded her that prayers were over, and Ann was clearing the table. What would happen next? Ah, her father was coming upstairs! Was he coming to her? She hoped not. She would not like him to see her tear-stained face ; besides, she did not want to speak to him again just yet. He had passed her door, and gone into his own room.

By and by he went downstairs again, and, in a few minutes, she heard the front door shut. He had gone out to preach, and she had not been there to brush his hat and see him off! Well, very likely he had not missed her. His thoughts were full of some one else now. Why should *she* care if *he* did not?

Now, a bump, bump of crutches on the staircase told her that her brother was coming upstairs. He was just beginning to get about the house a little, after his accident. Was he coming to seek her? No, he stopped short at his own room, and the house was quiet once more. No one cared about poor Alice! She had worked so hard to make home comfortable for these two, and this was all the reward she got!

Ah,—there was the sound of the crutch again—bump, bump, bump, up the stairs and along the passage till it stopped at Alice's door. Then there was a knock.

Alice straightened herself, and called : " Come in ! "

She could not deny her lame brother admittance to her room.

Clifford found her sitting in the rocking-chair, her eyes swollen with weeping, her mother's portrait in her lap.

" I came to inquire how your head is, Lallie," he said, sitting down opposite to her.

" It is no better," said Alice, grumpily. " I suppose papa has gone out ? "

" Yes, he has gone to chapel," said Clifford.

" Has he told you anything ? " said Alice.

" He has told me he is going to be married," said Clifford, quietly.

" Clifford, how *can* he? how *can* he?" burst out Alice. " I could not have believed it of him if he had not told me himself. It shows he could not have loved mamma as much as he pretended he did. Poor mamma! The idea of his thinking any one else could take her place! After all his professions of attachment to her and of grief when she died, to think that he should go and make love to some one else. I don't feel as if I could forgive him, Clifford."

" You do our father an injustice, Alice," said Clifford, seriously. " He was a most devoted husband to our mother. Nothing could have been more sincere than the tender affection he showed her, and the sorrow with which he has mourned her loss all these years. It is not your own sweet, true self that is speaking, Alice."

"But, Clifford," said Alice, weeping bitterly, "you don't know how earnestly I have tried to do my duty and make things comfortable for him ever since I left school. I have mended his clothes, darned his socks, kept his room tidy, mixed his cocoa, and attended to all his little comforts, just as mamma used to do. I have tried so hard to take her place, so that he should not miss her so much. And now to find that he is bringing a stranger in. It is cruel! cruel!"

"Alice, dear, you are speaking wildly. You cannot mean what you say. No one ever had a kinder and more affectionate father than we have. He loves you very much, and has thought about your comfort and welfare even in this arrangement. He says you have been a most dutiful daughter and a capable little housekeeper. But he says you have been taken from school too soon, and ought to have more time for your studies. Besides, he thinks you are not strong, and need a mother's care and companionship."

"Oh, I don't need any one but him and you," sobbed Alice. "We have been so happy together. If he thought I was not old enough he could have had Emily home, instead of bringing this interloper into our little paradise. I am sure I shall hate her!"

"Alice, Alice, my dear sister, you are forgetting our motto;" and he pointed to a card hung over the mantelpiece, on which were the words: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

Yes; Alice had forgotten that. She was certainly not showing the meek and lowly spirit of her Master.

There was silence in the room for a time, while Alice thought, and Clifford prayed. By and by Alice began to pray too. She was a sincere follower of Jesus Christ, and as such was aiming to be like Him. In temper and disposition she was naturally impulsive and hasty, and had many a hard battle with herself, but with God's help she was gradually getting more control over her impetuous spirit.

"I'm afraid I have been very hasty, Clifford," she said at last, "and spoken very improperly about our dear father. I did feel dreadfully angry with him. It seemed as if he cared no longer for us, but had transferred his affections to some one else."

"There you were mistaken, Lallie, dear. As you say, you judged too hastily. But now you will do your best to make some amends. He will be in directly," said Clifford, rising from his seat. "You will go down, dear, won't you, and be ready to welcome him home and give him his supper? He was very much pained at the way you received his news, and thought that your absence from tea meant that you were sulking with him. Show him that it is not so. I am tired and shall go to bed. Good-night, Lallie;" and he kissed her and left her.

Alice looked at her watch. It was nine o'clock. Her father would be home in a very few minutes now. She took up her mother's likeness to put it

away. What a sweet, gentle face it was! And how amiable and unselfish her disposition had always been.

"*You* would not have grumbled like I have, would you, darling?" said Alice, kissing the portrait again. "*You* would not have thought such hard things about dear papa. *His* happiness was always your first consideration. How selfish I have been! No matter who this lady is, she is *his* choice, and I must try to welcome her and love her for his sake, and for Christ's sake," she added.

Then she knelt down for a few moments and earnestly sought strength from above; after which she washed her face, smoothed her hair, and went downstairs to meet her father.

She poked up the fire in the little sitting-room, placed his slippers ready on the rug, and looked to see that the table was properly laid for supper.

He seemed a long time in coming, and she grew anxious.

"Perhaps he is not hurrying home because he thinks I shall still be sulking, and he knows Clifford will have gone to bed. O, poor papa! How wicked I have been! How could I treat him so!"

"Ting!" went the little clock on the mantel-shelf. Half-past nine! He was not often so late as this on a Wednesday evening.

Ah, there was the click of the gate, and the well-known footstep! Alice rushed to open the door

before his key could reach the lock, and had a broad smile on her bonny face ready to welcome him.

"Ah, Lallie, there you are," he said, kissing her. "Is your head better, dear?"

"It is quite well, thank you, papa."

She ran to mix his cocoa, and chatted to him merrily while he ate his supper.

Then, when he had retired to the easy chair, she sat down on the rug at his feet, and laid her head against his knee.

"Well, little girl," he said, "are you tired?"

"No, papa," said Alice. "I have been thinking how naughty I was about what you told me this afternoon. Can you forgive me, daddy?"

"I should not be a father if I could not, my child," he said, laying his hand upon her head. "Of course I forgive you."

"And you don't love us any the less because you love some one else?"

"Why should I? You are my own dear children, and always will be. And what is more, I would not marry any one who would not love my children as I do: so that, instead of taking love from you—as you seemed to think—I am hoping that you will have a double share of parental affection, such as you have not had since your dear mother died."

"Do you know who she is, Lallie?" he said, after a pause.

"No, papa, you did not tell me."

"Well, it is your old friend and class-leader in our last circuit, Miss Lindsay."

"O, papa," cried Alice, jumping up and kissing him, "*I am* so glad! *I do* love her so much! Why did you not tell me before?"

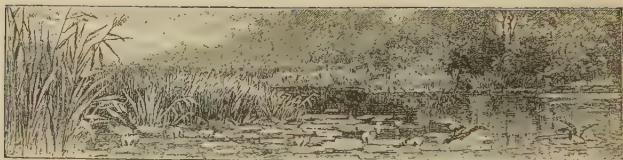
"You gave me no chance, my dear," said her father, laughing. "You seemed to resent the idea of a new mother so much, and rushed out of the room in such indignation, before I had time to tell you anything."

"I wonder why Clifford did not tell me," said Alice.

"No doubt he thought I had told you; or, at any rate, that it would be better to leave it to me to tell you."

"What a goose I have been!" cried Alice. "It is the very nicest thing that could happen! O, you dear, darling daddy, I love you more than ever!" and she hugged him almost to suffocation, till he was glad to send her to bed.





A MOUSE TROUBLE.



TWO little girls, aged about nine and eleven, were walking home from school together one Monday afternoon. They were dressed alike, neatly and simply, in grey frocks with black hats, sashes, and gloves, for they were in mourning for their father. The elder one had dark hair, and dark thoughtful eyes; the younger one had pretty brown hair and deep blue eyes.

"Don't go in just yet, Hilda," she said to her sister as they reached the gate of their home, "I want to tell you something, and it isn't very late. Come along here," and she led the way down a side street.

"Hurry up then," said Hilda, "for I want my tea."

"Well, first you'll promise not to tell any one, won't you?" and the younger child looked anxiously into her sister's face.

"Of course I shall not tell," said Hilda, and she had a face that could be trusted.

"I should get into an awful scrape if it was known

that I had let it out, but I always tell you everything, Hilda, and I felt that I just *must* tell some one."

"Well, tell away," said Hilda, laughing. "You are always such a slow-coach, Beryl, when you have anything to relate."

Beryl's chubby and usually smiling face was very grave just now. The little girl was evidently seriously troubled about something. She looked behind her to make sure that no one was near them, and then said in almost a whisper :

"The girls in our class are making up something."

"What are they making up? A poem?"

"No; I suppose it is what you would call a kind of plot."

"O, dear! How delightful! A gunpowder plot?"

"No, it's not gunpowder, but something rather like it."

"What, dynamite?"

"No; I mean it is something to frighten."

"Then it won't hurt any one," said Hilda, "only frighten them, you think?"

"I don't think it will hurt," said Beryl. "It's—— it's——" here she looked round once more to make sure they were quite alone, "it's a *mouse*, Hilda."

Hilda laughed. "How silly!" she said. "As if a mouse would frighten any one!"

"Well, you know how the girls dislike our new teacher, Miss Stubbs. She is dreadfully afraid of mice. When one ran across the class-room the other

day she quite screamed, and the girls all laughed at her. Next Saturday"—here Beryl lowered her voice again—"is Miss Stubbs' birthday, and all the class is to give her a present."

"What are you going to give her?" said Hilda.

"They are going to get a box and make it into a nice parcel, as if it were something very valuable, but inside the box they are going to put a mouse, so that when she opens it the mouse will jump out and frighten her."

Hilda looked interested.

"I think that is rather mean," she said, "and not very kind."

"That's what I think, Hilda, and I don't want them to do it; but they *will*, and they say I must join whether I like it or not, because I am in the class. Of course it is only a bit of fun, and I wouldn't mind joining, even if we were punished afterwards, but I am not sure whether it is *right*, Hilda, and that is what I wanted to ask you."

"Shall we ask Lill?" said Hilda, after some further conversation.

"O, no," answered Beryl in alarm. "The big girls are to know nothing about it. They might stop it, you know. And if it got out through me I should be in hot water with the whole class."

"Then let's ask mother," said Hilda.

"No, that would never do. Mother would be sure to say I must not have anything to do with it. But

she does not know school-girl ways. If you go to school you must do what the others do."

"Not if they do *wrong*, Beryl."

"No, of course not. But is it wrong? The girls say it is only a joke, and we must have a bit of fun. It won't do any one any harm."

"No, but it is mean," said Hilda. "That is all I can say."

By this time the children had reached their own gate once more, and it was time to go in. The rest of the family had already sat down to tea; the mother in her place, and Miss Holmes, the governess, at the other end of the table; Lilian the eldest girl, next to her mother, and Mabel, the youngest, next Miss Holmes. Hilda and Beryl took their seats opposite their sisters, and apologised for being late. Mabel was too busy with bread and jam to talk much, but Lilian was entertaining the party with her school experiences for the day. Hilda soon joined in the conversation, but Beryl remained silent and thoughtful, and ate very little tea.

"May I begin and go to school, mother?" said Mabel, when her hunger was somewhat appeased. "I don't like lessons at home."

"Don't you?" said her mother. "I doubt whether you would like them at school either."

"O, yes, I would," answered the child eagerly. "I would work ever so hard, and be as clever as Lilian if I went to school. Do let me go, mother."

"Well, darling, you are not very strong, and I like to have you at home. But, perhaps, if we get through the winter months nicely I may let you go in the spring."

After tea, the girls got their home lessons, which the governess helped them to prepare. Beryl was absent-minded and inattentive. Miss Holmes' patience was severely taxed, and at last the child went to bed with her lessons only half ready for the morning.

Poor Beryl! She was not used to concealment, and the burden of her secret lay heavy upon her. Hilda, her only confidante, was not old enough to know how to help her.

During the next few days Beryl got on badly at school, and lost her place in the class again and again. At home she was unusually quiet, and ill at ease. Her mother thought she was not well, and questioned her; but the child declared that she was all right.

Once when she was practising on the piano, the others chatting in the room, little Mabel chanced to say:

"Do you know, Lilian, I saw a little mouse in the nursery this morning?"

Beryl started, turned pale, and stopped playing to look at Mabel.

"Really, Beryl, what is the matter?" said Miss Holmes, who was overlooking the practice. "Are you not well, dear?"

"Yes," faltered Beryl, "I was only listening to Mabel."

"You should attend to the music, and not listen to

Mabel ; though I do not know what Mabel said to make you look so frightened."

"No, I only said there was a mouse in the nursery," said Mabel quickly. "Beryl isn't frightened of mice. They are dear loving little things. I would rather have a mouse for my birthday present than anything else."

"Would you?" said Beryl earnestly.

"Yes, indeed——" began Mabel.

"Hush, Mabel," said Miss Holmes. "Beryl must go on with her practising."

Poor Beryl feared that Miss Stubbs would hardly be of the same mind as Mabel about her birthday present.

That evening she managed to get a few minutes alone with Hilda.

"O, Hilda," she said, "it is getting worse and worse. Now they have arranged that we are to write a note to go with the present, and all sign our names."

"What will they say in the note?" said Hilda.

"That is the worst part. They are going to say that they hope she will accept the accompanying 'scent-bottle' from her pupils, as a mark of their affection and respect. You know it isn't a scent-bottle, Hilda, so that is not true."

"Why can't they put 'present' instead of 'scent-bottle'?"

"I asked them to do so, but they wouldn't. They said that was part of the fun. They won't listen to what I say, Hilda. You see I have only just come into that class, and am younger than most of them."

"I wouldn't have anything to do with it if I were you," said Hilda.

"But they say I *must*, Hilda. They say it *must* come from all the class."

"Is Flossie in it?"

Flossie was a little girl about Beryl's age, who lived next door to them, and with her elder sister Gwendoline went to the same school.

"Of course," said Beryl. "She enjoys it immensely. Why," she added in a whisper, "Flossie has promised to get the mouse. She says they have a lot in their house, and she can easily trap one and bring it to school. In fact, they say we are all to try to catch one in case of Flossie failing."

"Let us hope no one will be able to catch one," said Hilda, laughing, and then she ran off upstairs.

Beryl was left alone. She sat on a stool in front of the fire, her elbows resting on her knees, her chin in her hands, her eyes fixed on the burning coals. The fire-light sparkled in her hair, glowed in her eyes, and made fantastic shadows all around her.

"O, how nice it would be if no one could find a mouse!" mused the child. "If only God would keep all the little mousies in their holes for a few days! I wonder if He would, supposing I was to ask Him."

Beryl thought this would be an easy way out of her difficulty.

"Dear me, Miss Beryl, all alone in the dark?" said the servant entering with the lamp. "How the child

does seem to mope these few days ! Aren't you well, dearie ? ”

“ Quite well, Jane, thank you,” said Beryl. “ Have we got any mice in this house, Jane ? ”

“ Mice ! I should think not, indeed, with that great cat to look after them. At least there's none in the kitchen, or downstairs anywhere. Miss Mabel did tell me she see one in the nursery, but I spect she dreamt it. However, to please her, I've promised to set a trap there to-night. She says Miss Flossie, next door, has asked her to catch the mouse for her. Did you want any mice, dearie ? ”

“ O, no, thank you,” said Beryl with a shudder. “ I don't want one. I hope you won't catch one.”

“ Well, I must say as they are not very nice company in a house, though I'm not as frightened of them as some people are. I heard tell of one lady who was frightened into fits by a mouse.”

“ Did you ? ” said Beryl, and her blue eyes grew big with fear.

Her mother came into the room just then, and thinking Beryl looked tired, she sent her to bed.

When Hilda went up to bed an hour later, she undressed very quietly, as she thought Beryl was asleep. Just as she had dropped off to sleep herself, she was awakened by a sound of sobbing from Beryl's bed.

“ What's the matter, Beryl ? Are you crying ? ”

There was no answer but a sob.

"Beryl, what's the matter? If you don't tell me I shall call mother."

"Hush," said Beryl. "Is Mabel awake?"

"No; she's fast asleep."

"Well, Hilda, I don't know *what* to do. Miss Stubbs was so kind to me to-day when I did not know my lessons. She spoke so nicely to me after school, and if they go and frighten her——" here she sobbed afresh. "Jane says, sometimes ladies are frightened into fits by mice—and—and—Hilda, she might die! O, whatever shall I do?"

"What does Jane know about it?" said Hilda. "No lady would be so absurd as to go and die because a mouse jumped out of a box. Beryl, you are a little silly. Why don't you make up your mind not to have anything at all to do with it? Never mind what the girls say. You are not obliged to do what they tell you."

"But I can't prevent *them* doing it, Hilda, so anyhow she will be frightened."

"Well, tell her about it, and she will know what to expect."

"That would be sneaky. O, I don't know *what* to do! What *shall* I do? What *shall* I do?" and she began to cry piteously.

"Beryl," said Hilda softly, "why don't you do what our Sunday School teacher said?"

"What?" said Beryl between her sobs.

"Tell Jesus," said Hilda.

There was no response from Beryl's bed, except that the sobs grew quieter, and by and by Hilda dropped off to sleep again, as her sister seemed more composed.

She had not slept long when she woke again with a start, as if some noise had aroused her.

"Beryl!" she said in a whisper.

No answer.

"Beryl!" a little louder.

Still no reply.

"Beryl, are you asleep?"

"I don't hear her breathing," said Hilda to herself, when there was still no reply from Beryl; so she got out of bed and stepped across to Beryl's bed.

It was empty.

"Wherever has she gone?" said Hilda. "She is too frightened to go out of the room in the dark when all the house is shut up;" and Hilda went out on to the landing, and gazed up and down the dark staircase.

Meantime, where was Beryl?

Her sister's last piece of advice had reminded her of the thought that had come to her as she sat by the fire alone in the evening. Why should she not pray about this thing. Jesus knew everything. He could do everything. Could He not get her out of this difficulty, or show her what to do?

Then she remembered her conversation with Jane, and the trap that was to be set in the nursery that very night. She would pray that no little mouse should be tempted into that trap. But what if there were one already?

No sooner had this dreadful thought entered Beryl's head than she slipped softly out of bed, opened the door very quietly, and peered timidly into the darkness beyond. Then, trembling with cold and fear, she tip-toed gently with her little bare feet down the staircase that led to the nursery. She opened the door cautiously and listened.

The room was not perfectly dark, for there were a few red cinders in the grate. Everything seemed quite still, so Beryl stole across to the fireplace and poked the cinders into a blaze. Then she looked round the room, wondering where the trap was. She could not see it; but, as she stood quietly listening, she presently heard a very tiny little noise—a kind of scratching—in the cupboard. Her heart beat quickly. Could that be a mouse? There it was again!—*scratch, scratch*,—it *must* be a mouse.

Shaking with agitation, Beryl opened the cupboard door. Yes, there, at the bottom of the cupboard, was the trap; and—yes, the lid was shut down, and a poor little mouse was imprisoned within.

She carefully lifted the trap on to the table, and looked at the little captive with pitying eyes. Would this little mouse have to go to Flossie, and be carried to school, and used to frighten poor Miss Stubbs, who had spoken so kindly to Beryl that very day? If so, what would be the use of Beryl praying? Here was the mouse all ready to help in carrying out the dreadful plot. Nothing else was wanted, and no prayers could save Miss Stubbs as long as the mouse

was there. Beryl did not see any other means by which God could frustrate the wicked plan than by stopping the supply of mice. She forgot that God has many ways of working, and does not always choose the way that we think He will, because that is not always the best way.

At any rate, she determined that *this* dear little mouse, caught in her own nursery, should not be the one employed in the school-girls' plot; so, with trembling fingers, she raised the lid, saying:

"Come out, little mousie."

Before the words were out of her mouth, the mouse had darted past her, and was out of sight. She looked round in astonishment. There was not even the end of its tail to be seen! Beryl heaved a sigh of relief, and then, after replacing the trap in the cupboard, she sat a few moments in silent thought.

"I'm just like that little mouse," she said to herself, "shut in on all sides, and I don't see a way out anywhere. O, if God would only open the trap and let me out!"

To-morrow would be Friday, and the day after was Miss Stubbs' birthday. It had been arranged that the letter should be written to-morrow, and signed by all the girls in the class. On Saturday morning it would be presented to Miss Stubbs with the neatly-made parcel, as soon as she took her place in the class-room, with her own girls around her.

Beryl was a timid child, and had already been much

teased for her opposition to the plan. In an ordinary way she was generally a great favourite with her school-fellows, her bright and sunny disposition, and unvarying good nature, winning the hearts of every one. But she had just been moved up into another class, where she was almost the youngest; and at the very beginning of the new term this plan had been concocted to annoy the teacher, and Beryl had made herself unpopular by not falling in with it. To be unpopular was a new experience to Beryl, and she did not like it. Hence the girls had easily frightened her into believing that she *must* do what they did, whether she thought it was right or not.

But now, as she sat in the nursery, a struggle was going on in her mind. To-morrow the pen would be put into her hand, and she would be told to sign her name to a note which she believed to be untrue as well as unkind, thus signifying that she took part in the plot to annoy, frighten,—and perhaps *kill*—poor Miss Stubbs. Would it be right of her to do it? If she refused to do it, what would happen? She shivered as she thought of the anger of her school-fellows. Still, she was a soldier of Jesus Christ, and she must be brave to do what was right at any cost. She remembered a verse they sang at Sunday School:

“When I’m tempted to do wrong,
Make me steadfast, wise, and strong;
And when all alone I stand
Shield me with Thy mighty hand.”

Slipping on to her knees, she prayed these words over and over again, asking God to strengthen her in her determination not to put her name to the note. Then, as her refusal to join would not prevent the plan being carried out, she earnestly pleaded that no little mouse should be forthcoming, and thus the plot to frighten Miss Stubbs should be entirely defeated.

Her mind being now more at rest, she noiselessly stole back to her room. On the way she met Hilda in her white night-dress, looking for her.

"O, Beryl, where have you been? I was so frightened."

"I only wanted to go into the nursery for something. It is very cold, Hilda, let's go back to bed."

So the two shivering white-robed little girls got back into their warm beds, and were soon asleep.

The next day Beryl was heavy-eyed, and had a headache. Her mother wanted her to stay at home from school, but she begged to be allowed to go.

She was firm in her resolve not to sign the letter. Again and again, at every opportunity, the girls got hold of her and tried to force her to write her name. All the other signatures had been obtained, only Beryl's was missing, and that they determined to have. Beryl was just as determined that she would not give it; so the contest went on all day, and Beryl had a hard time of it.

At the close of the day she was very weary, but she had been victorious, and her heart was full of

thankfulness. Moreover, no little mouse had been found as yet, and she believed that God was answering her prayer, and that, after all, the girls would not be able to carry out their mischievous intention the next day.

When the children were seated at their lessons in the evening, Beryl's pale face bent over her book, upon which she was trying with all her might to fix her thoughts, there was a knock at the door, and Jane entered, to say that Miss Beryl was wanted.

Beryl changed colour nervously, and asked Miss Holmes if she might go.

Having obtained permission, she went into the drawing-room. There was her friend Flossie, all eager and excited.

"O, Beryl, I've got one! I came to show you. He is such a beauty! Look here." And she carefully drew from under her cloak a mouse-trap, with a large brown mouse in it.

Beryl's heart jumped into her mouth, and she could not speak. Had God failed her, after all?

"Isn't he a beauty?" said Flossie, gazing through the bars at her little prisoner. "I was afraid I should not be able to get one, but I caught this just in time. I caught it this evening, after tea. Don't you think it is a fine one, Beryl? Why don't you speak?"

Beryl was twisting her pinafore in her fingers, trying hard to swallow down the lump in her throat.

"O, Flossie," she said at last, "I *wish* you would let the little thing go."

"No, indeed," said Flossie, laughing, and putting the trap under her cloak again. "The girls will be so pleased. I am going to take it round to Gladys Steadman now. She will feed it and take care of it to-night, so that it will be nice and lively for to-morrow. The box is all ready for it at school. Good-night, Beryl. I just thought you would like to see it."

When Flossie had gone, Beryl gathered her books together and went disconsolately up to bed. Her head ached, and she felt tired and ill, and full of dread for the morrow. How could she bear to go to school?

But she did not go to school the next day. Before morning she was in a high fever, and her mother watched anxiously by her bedside.

"There's a mouse! There's a mouse!" she cried out. "O, Hilda, don't catch it. Let it go! Let it go! Open the door, and let it out."

"There is no mouse, darling," said her mother. "What do you mean? Only mother is here with you."

"O, mother," said the child, stretching out her little hot hand, "mother, will there be any mice in heaven? How I wish I was in heaven with father!"

"Not yet, darling," said her mother, soothingly. "Mother wants you here. Stay with mother a little longer."

The next day the doctor said Beryl was very seriously ill, and must be kept quite quiet for several

days. Her mother was with her constantly, but often Beryl did not know her, and rambled away about mice and traps, as if she could think of nothing else.

One day she woke from a kind of stupor, to find Miss Stubbs by her bedside. Hilda was also in the room. Beryl gazed at Miss Stubbs as if she did not know her.

"Are you quite well?" she said, slowly.

"Yes, thank you, Beryl," said Miss Stubbs. "I hope you are better."

"Did you have a birthday?" said Beryl.

"Yes, on Saturday I had a very nice birthday."

"Were you frightened?"

"No, not at all. Why should I be frightened?" said Miss Stubbs, smiling.

"Did they give you anything?" said Beryl, anxiously.

"The girls, you mean? Yes, they gave me a very nice present."

"Was it a mouse?"

"A mouse! No, you funny child. It was a beautiful scent bottle. Here it is," and she produced it from her pocket. "And I must thank you for your share in it, Beryl, dear."

Beryl looked bewildered, as she took the pretty present into her hot hand.

"I did not join," she said. "I had nothing to do with it."

"O, yes, you had. Here is your name in the letter, see!"

Beryl looked more astonished as she took the letter, and read, at the end of the list, her own name :
"Beryl Hope Ambrose."

"I did not write that," she said. "That is Flossie's writing. She does write rather like me."

"Hilda," she said, when Miss Stubbs had gone, "what does it mean?"

"It means," said Hilda, "that the girls changed their minds. After you refused to sign your name on Friday, and said how mean it was to pretend to be giving Miss Stubbs a nice present when they really were not, they began to think that perhaps it *was* rather a mean thing to do ; and when Flossie took the mouse round to Gladys Steadman's, she found that Gladys and some of the others had consulted together and bought the scent bottle. They decided not to tell you, because they said your look of consternation when the box was opened would be quite as good a joke as Miss Stubbs' fright would have been if the mouse had jumped out."

"O," said Beryl, and that was all she could say.

"Then, after all, God answered my prayer," she thought, as she closed her eyes to go to sleep.





FROM HILDA'S DIARY.

MONDAY.



Y sister Beryl is very ill. The house has to be kept very quiet, or she will die. So Mabel and I have come to stay with Aunt Kate for a little while.

I did not want to come away, but mother said that she would not like to send Mabel without me, and Mabel is such a noisy little thing, and too little to be kept still all day.

O, I do hope God will not let Beryl die! If He takes Beryl to heaven, as He did father last year, I do think I shall not love Him any more.

That seems to be a very naughty thing to say, but no one knows how precious Beryl is to me. I think I have always loved her more than anything else in the whole world, except father and mother, Why does God want all that we love the best?

TUESDAY.

Aunt Kate is our mother's sister, and she has just been married to Mr. Holmes, the minister, so that Miss Holmes, Mabel's governess, is now, in a sort of way, our cousin. She is very clever and very good, but I do not like her as well as Miss Alice.

Miss Alice is only a very little older than my sister Lilian, and used to go to the same school ; but now she only goes for music lessons and languages, because, until Aunt Kate came, she had to keep house for her father and invalid brother Clifford.

Clifford is very nice. I like him the best of all. He is lame. Last August he fell down and hurt his leg badly, so now he can only walk with crutches.

I forgot to say that Miss Alice teaches in the Sunday School, although she is so young, and Mabel is in her class. Mabel is very, very fond of her, and Miss Alice can always make her good when she is tiresome. I do not mean that Mabel is a naughty child, but she is so frisky and thoughtless. She is a sweet, affectionate little thing, and every one loves her very much.

WEDNESDAY.

I have a letter from mother this morning. She says Beryl is very ill, and does not recognise anybody, but keeps calling for father.

I am afraid if I write any more to-day it will be something very naughty, for I cannot help thinking God would be unkind to take Beryl away.

THURSDAY.

Cousin Clifford—for he says I may call him that—was playing the piano last night. He is very fond of music, and played several hymn-tunes so sweetly. Then he played “Thy will be done,” and he and Cousin Alice sang it.

Afterwards, while Cousin Clifford was lying on the couch, and no one else was in the room, I spoke to him about it.

Then he told me about the time when he broke his leg and became lame. He was going to be a missionary, but had to give all that up, and found it very hard at first to say to God: “Thy will be done.” But he learned to say it at last, and is now quite contented, and says he would rather be lame than not.

“And you will learn to say it too, little Hilda,” he said. “And you will find it quite easy to say, when you remember how much God loves us. He loves us far more than we can love each other; and if He takes Beryl to heaven it will be because He sees it will be best for you all.”

Then he repeated the verse:

“Good when He gives, supremely good,
Nor less when He denies;
Even crosses from His gracious hand
Are blessings in disguise.”

I think Cousin Clifford must love God very much indeed. It was he that showed me how to come to

Jesus last Children's Day, but he was not *Cousin Clifford* then, and he was not lame. I liked him then very much ; he was so kind and good. But I like him even better now.

FRIDAY.

I have no letter from mother this morning, and am very uneasy about Beryl.

Still, I have been thinking over what *Cousin Clifford* said, and have asked God to help me to trust in His love, and I have asked Him to take care of Beryl, and do what is best for her and for us ; so that now I feel more comforted.

Yesterday evening several of the boys from the Sunday School came for a choir practice. *Cousin Clifford* teaches them. Willie Warren is among them, and sings the best of them all. He has such a beautiful voice that he often sings solos. I should think Bessie is very proud when she hears her brother sing in church.

I liked hearing the boys practise their singing, so Aunt Kate said I might stay in the room and listen to them, while she was putting Mabel to bed. Willie Warren sang: "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd ; He shall gather the lambs in His arms, and carry them in His bosom."

I think *Cousin Clifford* must have been thinking of Beryl when he asked him to sing that. How loving and good our Saviour is ! I am sure He will take care of Beryl.

SATURDAY.

O, mother, mother! I do want to come home. It is hard to stay here when Beryl is so ill, and I shall, perhaps, never see her again. I had a letter from Lilian this morning, saying there was no change, and mother was too busy to write.

After getting the letter, I felt very naughty all day. I kept thinking that I was made to stay here just because of Mabel: that if she were not such a giddy, playful, noisy child, I might be at home with my darling Beryl. Then I felt quite angry with Mabel, and could not bear to hear her talk and laugh, and see her go frisking about the house, just as if there was no trouble at home. I am afraid I spoke crossly to her more than once.

But something occurred this evening that made me feel quite ashamed of myself.

Just before Mabel went up to bed, she came and put her cheek against mine and said:

"Darling, I want to show you something."

She drew from under her pinafore a picture that Cousin Alice had given her. It was a picture of the Good Shepherd, and made me think of Willie Warren's song.

"Don't you think this is Beryl?" Mabel said, pointing to a little lamb that lay in the Shepherd's arms.

Another little lamb that was playing around His feet, she said was herself.

"And this is you, Hilda," she said, pointing to one that was following close behind the Shepherd.

I did feel so ashamed that I had been vexed with the dear little thing, and thought she did not care about Beryl, when all the time she was having such sweet thoughts about us all.

I am afraid that I have not kept very close to the Good Shepherd to-day.

“ Dear Saviour, to Thy little lamb
A lamb-like temper give,
And daily, hourly grace bestow,
In joy and peace to live.
“ Thine own meek, lowly mind impart,
The Spirit like a dove,
And daily may I learn of Thee
To love as Thou dost love.”

MONDAY.

It is just a week since we came here.

This morning Mr. Holmes called me into his study, and asked if I had heard from mother.

I said, “ No.”

Then he took me on his knee, and stroked my hair, and said :

“ My dear little Minnie, that went to heaven, had soft dark curls like yours. You remind me of her very much, dear child. Shall I tell you a story ? ”

Of course I said, “ Yes, please, sir.”

Then he said : “ Once there was a band of children going a very long journey to a beautiful City, where lived a King who was very rich, and very powerful, and very good. He loved these children very much, and wanted them to come and live with Him, so

because they were only weak children, and did not know the way, He had sent His own Son to show them the way, and lead them to this beautiful City.

"It was not always an easy road that they travelled along. Sometimes it was very rough and steep, and the children would have got very tired but for the Captain, as they called the King's Son. He was always at hand to cheer them on, and help those that were weary, and carry those that grew faint.

"It happened that one little child was not so strong as the others, and the journey seemed very long to her. The Captain saw that she was very weary, so He sent word to the King, and what do you think the King did?

"He sent a special Messenger to bring this little child to the City by a much shorter road.

"The child was not at all afraid when she saw the beautiful Messenger the King had sent, but put her hand in His quite joyfully, and turned round to say good-bye to her little comrades.

"The other children were very sorry to part from her, and their tears fell as they said good-bye to her; but they did not try to keep her back, for they knew she would soon be in the glorious City with the King, while they had still a long toilsome way to go. So they watched their little comrade till she was out of sight, and as they watched they sang :

" ' Lift up your heads, ye golden gates,
Let the little traveller in.' "

"Then they set off on their journey again, thinking of the time when they too should reach the City, and find their happy little friend there. And they sang :

" ' Here we suffer grief and pain,
Here we meet to part again,
In heaven we part no more.
O ! that will be joyful,
When we meet to part no more.' "

When Mr. Holmes had finished his story, I was crying, for I knew what it meant.

Then he prayed so beautifully for me, and mother, and all of us.

After that he gave me a little envelope from mother. I opened it, and found only one of Beryl's pretty brown curls, and the words : " Beryl Hope Ambrose, taken to heaven on Sunday, Oct. 11th."

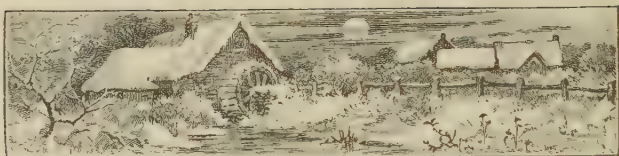
Beryl is with the Good Shepherd. She is

" Safe in the arms of Jesus,
Safe on His gentle breast ; "

and the closer I keep to Him, the nearer I shall be to my darling sister.

When Mr. Holmes told Mabel that Beryl had gone to heaven, she looked very serious, and I wondered if she was going to cry. But she did not. Her eyes grew very big and bright as she said :

"How splendid it must be for Beryl to be in heaven ! Don't you think so, Uncle Holmes ? I wish *I* was there too, and mother, and all of us ! "



THE STORY OF A DESERTER.

IT is Saturday evening ; and if we go along the High Street we shall meet our friend Willie Warren again, trudging along on his usual rounds. He has been promoted to a barrow now, on which he can take several baskets at once. On his barrow, besides some baskets of groceries, are two or three square baskets with partitions, containing bottled ales and beer.

Willie is whistling as usual, not “Onward, Christian Soldiers,” this time, but

“Stand up, stand up for Jesus,
Ye soldiers of the cross ;
Lift high His royal banner,
It must not suffer loss !”

As he whistled, his thoughts were busy. He was thinking about those bottles on his barrow, for Willie was a Band of Hope boy.

“Now, I wonder,” he was saying in his mind, “whether a Band of Hope boy ought to carry them there things. They’ve got to be carried, that’s certain, and it’s perhaps best a Band of Hoper should take

'em than any one who wasn't, for, you see, they are no temptation to him. Now, I've seed lads tip up the empties and drain 'em into their mouths. I'd never do that, if I was ever so thirsty. So perhaps it's best, though I don't *like* taking 'em. I must ask teacher about it.

"Still,"—he went on—"if I refused to take 'em, I know what 'ud 'appen. The guv'nor would make short work of *me*. I'd get the sack, sure enough. But I'll ask teacher;" and this seemed to settle the matter for the present.

He whistled on :

"Ye that are men now serve Him
Against unnumbered foes ;
Let courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose."

In due time his errands were finished ; the barrow with the empty baskets was wheeled back to the shop ; the shutters were put up for the night ; and Willie was free to go home.

When he reached the door it was very late, and he expected that every one would have gone to bed. He took off his boots, and, carrying them in his hand, walked noiselessly up the staircase to his mother's room. It was empty. His mother, Bessie, and the children had retired for the night.

The room was quite tidy, and on the table was a plate of bread and cheese, which Willie's mother had put out for his supper. Willie was hungry and enjoyed his meal.

He had just finished it and was proceeding to clean his boots, remembering that the next day was Sunday, when he heard footsteps approaching cautiously, and there was a timid knock at the door.

In response to Willie's "Come in," the door opened, and a sailor lad entered.

Willie stared for a moment, then, throwing down his brushes, he called out :

"Hallo, Jack! it's never *you*, is it? What have you been doing not to write? Mother's been so anxious this long time. I'm awful glad you've come."

"Where is mother?" said Jack.

"She's gone to bed. Hush, we mustn't make a noise to wake 'em all up. It 'ull be a nice surprise in the mornin'. An' we can 'ave a good chat, you an' me. But why didn't you write an' say as you was comin'?"

"Well, fact is," said Jack, hesitating, "I didn't know whether as 'ow I should come or not. I—I—. Well, I've been robbed, Bill."

"Robbed! how was that?"

"Well, it's about a week since we come ashore. An' me and some of my mates went into a public-house to have a drink, and I lost all my money."

"O, Jack, and *you* a Band of Hope boy! What for did you go into the public?"

"O, I've 'ad to give up all that, Bill. A sailor can't be a totaller. I'd never 'ave come 'ome without any

money to give mother, but that I'm clean fagged out, and can't find a night's lodgin' nowheres."

"Poor old Jack! an' I specs you're starved. What a pity I ate all that bread and cheese. But I'll light up the fire and make you a cup of tea, and p'raps we can find something to eat in the cupboard."

Jack sat moodily watching his brother while he made preparations for his supper. Willie was whistling softly as he moved about—it was the same old tune:

"Stand up! stand up for Jesus!
Ye soldiers of the cross."

"Eh, Billy," said Jack at last, "that does remind me of the Sunday School. My! it's near a year since I heerd any hymns like that. I've 'ad to give up thinking of them things, Billy."

"You don't mean, Jack, that you're a deserter," said Willie pausing, with the tea-pot in his hand, to look at his brother.

"Well, I don't know as you need call it *that*," said Jack, looking rather shamefaced.

"But if you've give up following Christ, it means that you've deserted His banner and gone over to the enemy. You've not done that, have you, Jack?" said Willie, earnestly. "You an' me an' Bess all started together last November, near a year ago. Bess an' me are still following, and we thought you wos."

"Fact is," said Jack, "it's very hard for a sailor. Yer can't even say your prayers without getting

things throwed at yer. It takes a deal o' sperrit to kneel down when your mates is all scoffing at yer. I tried it, but I had to give it up."

"Then, if you give up prayin', I don't wonder as you 'ad to flee before the enemy," said Willie.

Jack did not like Willie's way of putting it. Of all things, he detested a coward.

"Look 'ere, old Billy," he said, "I'd like to see *you* try it. You don't know what you're talking about. No one as hasn't been a sailor knows what it is."

"P'raps not," said Willie, meditatively. "But the Captain knows. He is always in the thickest of the fight."

Jack was now getting his supper. The warm tea was very refreshing. Willie had taken up his boots again, and while putting a polish on them was whistling, and Jack's memory supplied the words:

"Stand up ! stand up for Jesus
The trumpet-call obey ;
Forth to the mighty conflict,
In this His glorious day :
Ye that are men now serve Him
Against unnumbered foes ;
Let courage rise with danger,
And strength to strength oppose.

"Stand up ! stand up for Jesus !
Stand in His strength alone ;
The arm of flesh will fail you ;
Ye dare not trust your own :
Put on the Christian's armour,
And watching unto prayer,
Where duty calls, or danger,
Be never wanting there."

Jack began to fear that he *had* played the coward. It had not been his intention to do so. When he had enlisted under the Banner of the Cross he had fully made up his mind to be a valiant soldier of the Lord Jesus Christ. No difficulties should daunt him; no foes should frighten him. Come what might, he would be true to his Captain. He would "stand up for Jesus" wherever he might be, and in whatever company. Nothing should tempt him from his allegiance to Christ.

But, alas for his resolves! He could not stand the sneers of his mates when he read his Bible and knelt to pray. And once tempted to give up prayer, he was like Samson shorn of his strength; he was like a soldier deprived of his weapons. Sailing with a godless captain and crew, he had little chance against his spiritual enemies unless he daily sought guidance from God's Word, and fresh supplies of strength at the Throne of Grace. So gradually he gave way to the evil influences around and within him; all the while making laudable excuses for himself, and easing his conscience by saying it was "only for a time." When his circumstances altered he would do differently. At present everything was against him. A boy in his position could not be expected to live as a Christian; but when circumstances were more favourable, then he would show the world what he could do! For instance, when he became a captain! ah, he would be a model Christian captain! All hands should be piped on

deck for prayers every day. Divine service should be conducted every Sunday, with plenty of singing. He would have a little harmonium on board, and they should sing all the hymns he had liked so much in the Sunday School. No swearing should be allowed ; and all the men and boys should be encouraged to sign the pledge. In fact, his ship should be a floating church, a little heaven below. So he satisfied his conscience by making good resolutions for the future.

Now, on this Saturday evening, his first night at home, while he was eating his supper, and listening to his brother whistling the old familiar hymn, he began to think that he had really acted the part of a coward,—a mean, detestable coward. It was as if he had hauled down his flag at the first sight of the enemy, and was waiting to hoist it again till the foe had disappeared from view. What could be more cowardly and despicable than that ?

Willie had changed his tune, and Jack's memory could again supply the words :

“ Am I a soldier of the cross—
A follower of the Lamb ?
And shall I fear to own His cause,
Or blush to speak His name ? ”

His supper ended, Jack turned round to the fire. Willie had finished his boots. He put away the remnants of the meal, tidied up the room, and then sat down for a chat with his brother before going

to bed. He listened with interest to the story of Jack's wanderings and adventures. When that was over, Jack said :

"You ain't told me no news yet, Bill. I suppose father's still away."

"Father's dead," said Willie, solemnly. "He got ran in for something, I don't know what, an' then he took ill and died in prison."

"Ah, well," said Jack, "he won't bother us no more. An' how's mother and all the kids?"

Then Willie told the story of his father's visit home, and how he had hurt mother so that she had to go to the hospital ; but had come home again now quite well. And how he and Bess had managed during that dreadful time of trouble, and God had helped them to take care of the little ones and find food for the household.

"The kids have growed fine," he said. "You won't 'ardly know Frederick, he's growed so big. And Carryliny is a pretty little lass—with bright curls all over her head. An' Adarann, she goes to school, an' is gettin' quite a big girl. An' the baby, you've never seed the baby? He's a bouncer, he is. Bess still goes every day to Mrs. Ambrose's, and is quite proud of the wage she brings 'ome. O, an' our teacher, Jack, poor Mr. Clifford Holmes, he's been and lamed hisself so as he has to go on crutches, an' can never be a missionary as he hoped."

The mention of the teacher took Jack's thoughts

back to the time when he had enlisted under the Banner of Jesus.

"I say, Bill," he said, presently, "do you think as those as 'ave deserted can come back again? Do yer think they can enlist over again?"

"I'm sure on't," said Willie, eagerly. "You know Peter deserted, he did, an' he 'listed again and was faithful and became an apostle, an' a missionary, an' a martyr. There's no knowin' what you might be if you 'listed again, Jack."

"But somehow I feel sort of shamed to come back; as if I deserved to be chucked into prison for a deserter."

"I'd be more ashamed to stay away," said Willie. "I'd rather be chucked into prison by my own King than go over to serve His enemies. But He won't chuck you into prison, Jack. You remember the story of the Prodigal what got tired o' deserting and came back?"

"Ay," said Jack, dreamily. Many things were coming back to his memory to-night. "Let's read it again, Billy," he said, suddenly. "Have you a Bible? I ain't read it so long, I almost forget it."

Willie got his Sunday School Bible, and the brothers read the beautiful parable together, and then knelt down and asked God to receive this returning prodigal,—this young soldier who had "deserted," but was wanting to "enlist again."



“JEHOVAH-NISSI.”

IT is Children's Day again ; and if we enter this large school-room, we shall see among the crowd of children collected there some whom we have seen before.

They are singing as we go in. How well they seem to know the hymn, and how heartily they all join ! What music can be sweeter in the ears of God, or of man, than the voices of children raised in hymns of praise !

There is something rather *warlike*, however, about this song :

“ O we are volunteers in the army of the Lord,
Forming into line at our Captain's word.
We are under marching orders to take the battle-field,
And we'll ne'er give up the fight till the foe shall yield.
“ Come and join the army, the army of the Lord.
Jesus is our Captain, we rally at His word.
Sharp will be the conflict with the powers of sin,
But with such a Leader we are sure to win.”

While they are singing, let us look round the room. Like many other school-rooms the walls are decorated with banner-texts. At the back of the platform, facing all the children, is a very large one. The words are : "Jehovah-Nissi: The Lord my Banner." Smaller ones are hung at each side.

Now the hymn is over ; and while some notices are being read out from the platform, let us look around and see if we can recognise any of these young people.

Ah, in that corner is our lame friend, Clifford Holmes, with a class of boys around him ! And the next class to his is taken by his friend, Ted Westerman. In Clifford's class is our little friend, Willie Warren, with his sailor brother, Jack. On the wall just over them is a banner-text : "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of Thy truth."

Jack had pointed it out to Willie as he went in, and said : "I'm not agoin' to be afeared to 'display' it no more, Bill."

In the corresponding class on the other side is Hilda Ambrose, her earnest dark eyes fixed on the speaker ; and beside her sits her little neighbour, Flossie, who has begun the pilgrim journey since the death of her friend Beryl. The text on the wall above this class is : "His banner over me is love."

Alice Holmes is in the front there with a class of very little girls. Among them we notice little Mabel Ambrose, with her bright sunny face, and Ada Warren, brought by her sister Bessie.

Among the older girls at the back is Bessie herself. Here also is a sweet-faced girl whom we ought to recognise, Lilian Ambrose. By her side is her dear friend Gwen, who has decided to walk in the way to heaven with Lilian. Over this class is the text: "In the name of our God we will set up our banners."

On the opposite side of the room we find Dennis Steadman, and with him his school-fellow Harry Hilton, who has determined to fight under the same banner as Dennis. Above them is the text: "Lift ye up a banner upon the high mountain." Over in the same class as Hilda and Flossie, we see Dennis Steadman's little sister Gladys, led to enlist partly through her brother's persuasion and example, and partly through the death of her school-fellow, little Beryl Ambrose.

So we see that during the year, these young soldiers have not only gained in strength and stability, but have brought in recruits by their fidelity and zeal.

One only is missing of those who enlisted last year. One young soldier has already received the victor's crown in the presence of the King.

Now they are singing again :

- “ Sound the battle-cry ! See ! the foe is nigh ;
Raise the standard high for the Lord ;
Gird your armour on ; stand firm, every one ;
Rest your cause upon His holy word.
- “ Strong to meet the foe, marching on we go,
For our cause, we know, must prevail ;
Shield and banner bright gleaming in the light ;
Battling for the right, we ne’er can fail.
- “ O Thou God of all ! hear us when we call ;
Help us one and all, by Thy grace ;
When the battle’s done, and the victory won,
May we wear the crown before Thy face.”

After the hymn, Mr. Holmes rose to address the children.

“ It is just one year to-day,” he said, “ since some of you first enlisted under the Banner of the Cross, and we took for our motto for the year the words : ‘ I will follow Jesus.’ I dare say you have found that following Jesus is not always easy work. You have had to fight sometimes, have you not ? ”

Several hands went up, Willie Warren’s, Dennis Steadman’s, and many others.

“ Your daily life is your battle-field,” continued Mr. Holmes. “ It is there you must display your colours, and prove your fidelity to your King. As true and valiant soldiers of Jesus Christ, you must not be afraid to wear His uniform, lift up His banner, and manfully fight His enemies. Among your friends and daily companions, never forget that you are Christ’s soldiers. Whether you are at work or

at play, remember that your Captain's eye is upon you; and He will give you the victory if you are faithful. Can any of you tell me what is the use of a *banner*?"

Many answers were given to this question.

"Well," said Mr. Holmes, "I see you have a pretty good idea about it. The banner is a sign of *union*; it is also a sign of *defiance*; and it is a sign of *triumph*.

"When a battle is fought, two sides are engaged in the conflict, and two different banners are carried. In the heat of battle a soldier might get separated from his own party, but the banner is the rallying place. It is lifted as high as possible, so that all can see it. Where the banner is carried the soldiers follow, no matter how dangerous it may be. And after the battle the scattered forces are collected round the banner of their king. Those who fight under one banner are united in purpose and aim.

"So in the battle of life there are only two banners. We must fight under the one or the other. The Christian's rallying point is our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Who was given as 'an ensign of the people,' and Who was 'lifted up from the earth,' that He might 'draw all men unto Him.' His banner over us is *love*. The love of Christ is the constraining power that unites and animates all His soldiers. If we do not fight under that banner, dear young friends, we are fighting under the banner of His enemy.

“Then the banner is a sign of *defiance*. ‘Terrible as an army with banners,’ says the Word of God. An army with banners is an army that means to fight, an army that defies its enemies, and does not fear to make known its presence and intention. ‘Thou hast given a banner to them that fear Thee, that it may be *displayed*.’ Do not be afraid to show your colours. Only a beaten and cowardly army would hide its banner. Lift up the banner that all may see it. Let all around you know that you are fighting for Jesus. And if you are brave and trust in your Captain, Satan himself will quail before you, for in his eyes you will be ‘terrible as an army with banners.’

“The banner is also a sign of *victory*. It is carried before the victorious army. It is planted on the conquered citadel. After the defeat of Amalek, Moses had an altar raised to commemorate the victory, and he inscribed on it the words: ‘Jehovah-Nissi.’ So, dear young friends, ‘In the name of the Lord will we set up our banners.’ We will ascribe all the victory to Him, for in His strength alone can we hope to win.”

Of course I cannot give you the whole of Mr. Holmes’ address; but I have just indicated some of the thoughts he tried to impress upon these young soldiers.

They were about to start on another year’s pilgrimage, another year of conflict and trial, and, if they

were faithful, another year of blessed victory and of progress on the journey heavenwards.

Before separating, they joined in singing that beautiful hymn :

"Soldiers of Christ, arise,
And put your armour on,
Strong in the strength which God supplies
Through His eternal Son ;
Strong in the Lord of hosts,
And in His mighty power,
Who in the strength of Jesus trusts
Is more than conqueror."

* * * * *

In this sequel to "The Two Banners," we have introduced you again to the children specially named in the Allegory, as having taken their stand by the blood-red banner of the Cross.

Christopher, Theodore, and Mary Pilgrim, Ernest and his sister Martha, Daniel Steadfast, and the four sisters, Grace, Faith, Hope, and Joy, are shown under their own names, and in their own homes, for it is there that the Christian conflict is principally fought.

In the little and apparently insignificant details of every-day life, the young Christian finds his battle-field. Our warfare is not with visible foes of flesh and blood, but with the suggestions of our own evil hearts, with the love of self that is born in us, and with the subtle temptations of our ever-present adversary. And the victory is to be gained, not by carnal weapons and human strength, but by

constant looking to Jesus, our Omnipotent Leader and Captain.

If in early life we are faithful in these little things, if we are brave and true in confessing Christ among our school-fellows and daily companions, we may one day be counted worthy to bear our witness in a larger sphere, and do good service for our King in the world's great battle between right and wrong, good and evil, God and Mammon.

One thing, however, is as sure as God's own promise,—that no matter how small a corner we may be permitted to occupy, if *there* we earnestly and patiently “fight the good fight of faith,” we shall finally inherit the victor's crown. “Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life.”



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